GAME OF THE MONTH: Rebel Assault II

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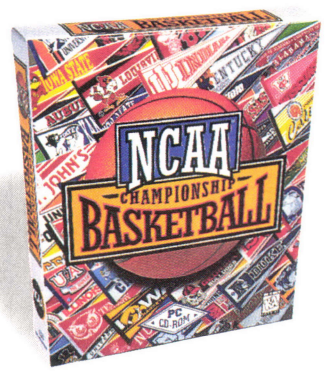
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Bullfrog's new Dungeon Keeper puts you in charge of the bad guys. See our Guided Tour on page 41.

IMAGE COURTESY OF BULLFROG

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By John P. Withers

Sure, war is hell, but wargames can be fun! We lead new recruits through the wargame ranks and help decide which of the six top military strategy games you should command.

36 The Stars Come Out

By Donald St. John

What are Sting, the Rolling Stones, Toad the Wet Sprocket, Natalie Merchant, and the MTV Unplugged crew doing in your PC? Find out as *PC Entertainment* spins eleven hot new multimedia music CD-ROMs.

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COVER STORY

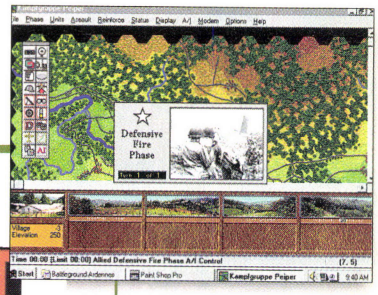
By Steve Klett

Heroism's overrated. Have some diabolical fun as the leader of the lowlifes in Bullfrog's upcoming action/strategy sensation. Our exclusive who's-who and what's-what guide to commanding your monster minions will ensure your place as Dungeon Master.

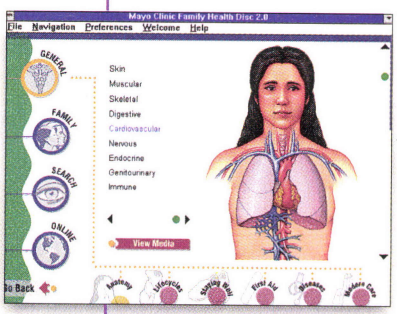




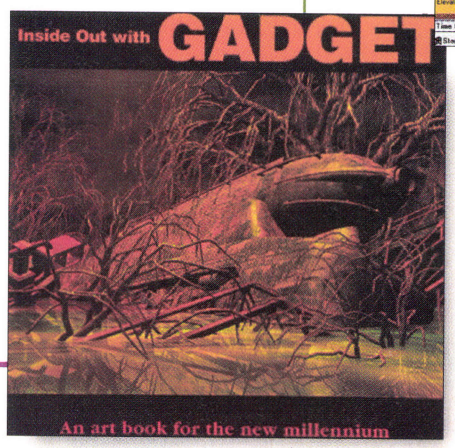
Get on the stick with CH Products' new F-16 Combat-Stick and a trio of other cool controllers, page 100.



Hell, war is fun! See for yourself, page 32.



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PC GAMES®

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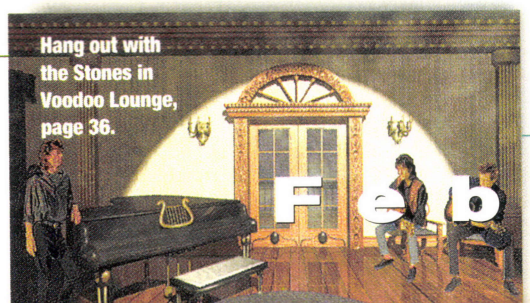
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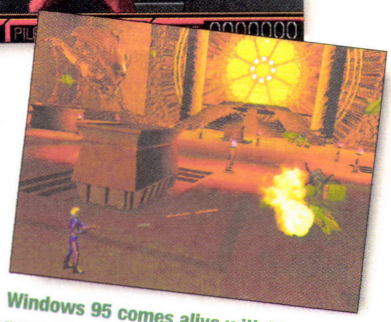
Hang out with the Stones in Voodoo Lounge, page 36.

Guess who's back in Rebel Assault II, page 44.





Take to the skies Soviet-style in Su-27 Flanker, page 76.



Windows 95 comes alive with The Hive, page 48.

PC Entertainment®

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

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Get the gaming and multimedia answers you need on the Internet's World Wide Web. These six help sites have answers for all your computing queries.

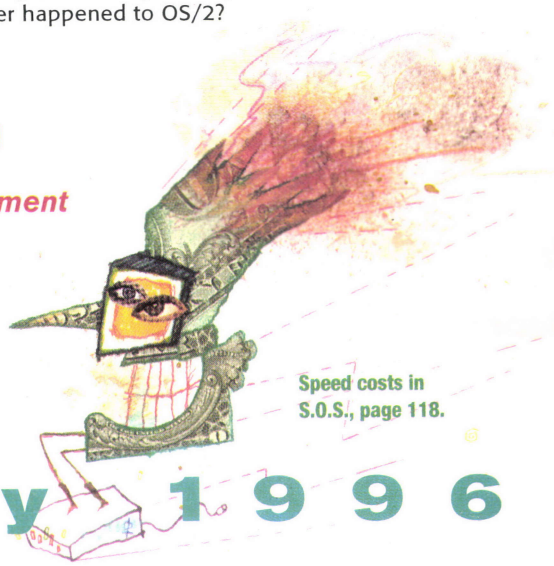
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118 S.O.S.

Is ISDN worth the dough, the cheapest way to surf the Net, and whatever happened to OS/2?

= See related demo on the *PC Entertainment* CD-ROM



Speed costs in S.O.S., page 118.

February 1996



Fredric Paul

Reality Lite

One of the things that computers do best is simulate reality—for business, for science, and for games. From an entertainment perspective, the wonderful thing about computer sims is that you only have to simulate the parts you want. You can ignore or alter all the messy, inconvenient stuff that clutters up the real thing.

Take war, for example. As writer John P. Withers quickly points out in "Basic Training for PC Generals" (page 32), "War is hell." But wargames are not. In fact, they're fun! And the more accurately they simulate a real war, the more engrossing these games become.

The apparent contradiction works because wargames don't even try to simulate all the aspects of armed combat. Wargames are locked in never-ending competition to devise new ways to boost the level of strategy and tactics, to play off the military-industrial complex's cool technology and hardware, to recreate the heady sense of power in ordering troops to do your bidding, and—especially—to blow things up. The goal is to make the game disappear so that players really feel like they're doing these things.

But certain elements of the real thing are strictly verboten. No wargame turns your foot to lasagna when you accidentally step on a land mine, you don't come home to find your house turned into a smoking crater, and parents of wargamers don't get letters from the President that start off, "It is my sad duty to inform you..." That kind of game wouldn't be fun at all.

Controlling the level of simulation works in other—less cataclysmic—areas, too. Take a look at the new multimedia music titles profiled in webmaster Donald St. John's feature "The Stars Come Out" on page 36. The latest discs simulate the experience of hanging out in a nightclub with the Rolling Stones, cruising on the tour bus with B.B. King, or visiting Sting in his palatial English manor. You get to hear their stories, meet their friends, listen to them play, and basically pretend to be on intimate terms with some really big stars. Terrific!

Here again, these "simulations" leave out the unpleasantries of the celebrity experience. No clouds of tobacco smoke, no sneering doormen making it clear that you're not cool enough to go inside, no sycophantic yes-men between you and the stars, no watered-down whiskeys or two-drink minimums (of course, there's still a pretty stiff cover charge).

Let's face it: The real measure of a computer simulation isn't how accurately it mirrors reality. The key is how well the game recreates those aspects of reality deemed important and entertaining. Not to mention how clearly the simulation designers understand their subject and how well they choose which elements to simulate, which factors to change, and which parts are safely ignored.

That's where the fun starts.

FP

Tell me what you think! Send e-mail to fpaul@iftw.com; fax me at 415-349-7482; or send snail mail to Editor, *PC Entertainment*, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

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Letters

Kudos to Cyberia

I love your magazine because it takes an honest look at the current crop of games and hardware and isn't afraid to step on a developer's toes when it's really called for.

Also, I enjoyed reading your in-depth look at "The Making of Cyberia^2" (*Electronic Entertainment*, November 1995, page 60), not just because it is a superior game, but because your magazine went that extra step and educated its readers about the hard work that goes into making a high-quality computer game.

Brian Spatola
radtech@wavenet.com

More Sports

I play a lot of sports games, such as Front Page Sports Football. I'd like to know if there will be a good college football game coming out soon. If so, where can I get it?

Greg Densmore
Houston, TX

If the NCAA is where you like your gridiron action, you've got some new choices to check out. Look for IBM's and Micro Sports' coaching sim, All-American College Football (November 1995, page 132) now. Also, Mindscape has a Windows 95 college football game in the works. —*Ed.*

Confirm, Please

Over the past months, your magazine has talked about Confirmed Kill. I would like to try it but have not used the Internet before. I joined Netcom and got a DOS shell account as you suggested. Unfortunately, you did not specify what files to download to play. Also, I can't seem to access the telnet address.

Greg Carleton
mobil@netcom.netcom.com

You can download Confirmed Kill—which is now called Warbirds—from ICI's website at **www.cris.com/~Gunjan/index.html** *or FTP at* **iCi2.infohwy.com.** —*Ed.*

Familiar Faces

I have a small complaint: The Ref mentions games that star "some actor who hasn't worked in more than a decade" ("Caution: Marketing Ahead," *Electronic Entertainment*, November 1995, page 50). Of course, I'm quoting this line out of context, but it got me thinking about how annoyed I get when people constantly assault actors and actresses who haven't made a movie for a while. As a devoted gamer, I like to see a familiar face I can relate to when I start up a game. I feel that these people deserve a lot of credit for the work they do. I mean, who cares if Mark Hamill hasn't done anything good since *Star Wars*? He will always be remembered as Luke Skywalker anyway. I just feel that these people deserve a little more credit and a little less criticism.

Timothy Yarborough
loki@westol.com

There's a difference between an actor like a Mark Hamill, who has done a fine job in several titles (he even collected our Lifetime Achievement Murphy Award; see January, page 44), and many of Hollywood's fading stars who seem to appear in computer games just to collect a paycheck. If game makers want to promote actors in their products, they need to produce theater worth paying for.—The Ref

Is Religiosity Right?

I read your review of Space Hulk for the 3DO (*Electronic Entertainment*, September 1995, page 78) and was struck by reviewer Peter Olafson's comment that "the weird religiosity of the computer game version has thankfully been excised." According to Olafson, it seems "religiosity" stands for anything associated with the major religions. I am appalled by this review's lack of depth. The PC version's church organ music and comments such as "bless your weapons" set a chilling tone for the game's terrifying universe, and I'm disappointed that this aspect has been cut.

Similarly, David Israel's "annoying bit of religiosity" comment in his review of SimTower (*Electronic Entertainment*, September 1995, page 71) suggests that anything related to religion is a bad thing. Well, religion is a part of our society. When game designers invent alternate universes, they draw upon all elements of experience, including religion, to create environments that are both familiar and alien. Hence, if your reviewers condemn religion, I find it hard to look to your reviews for anything but predictable and ordinary opinions.

Rusty Williams
rusty_w@msn.com

We have nothing against religion, but it has its appropriate time and place. Religious overtones work in some games, not in others. Furthermore, not all gamers share the same beliefs. What adds depth and meaning for some may put off others. —*Ed.*

SoftRAM^{95}—Eh?

I just read your article on SoftRAM^{95} (*Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 44) which I felt took a "middle of the road" stand on the product. I had just finished reading the *TIME* magazine article (November 27, page 81) where William Dowell disputes the fact that Soft RAM^{95} even works.

The question is: Do your reviewers verify product claims?

Lou Rizzo
LouRizzo@aol.com

Yes, our reviewers attempt to verify product claims. We tested SoftRAM^{95} on Windows 3.1 and it worked. However, we did not verify the Win 95 claim. Syncronys says it is working on a Win 95 patch for the program. —*Ed.*

Whoops

Microsoft's EasyBall, featured in "Kiddie Keyboards and Mini Mice" (*Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 46), is not sold separately. It is only bundled with Microsoft Explorapedia: The World of Nature for $54.95.

Got something you want to get off your chest? Do it! Write, fax, or e-mail us at: Letters to the Editor, c/o **PC Entertainment,** *951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7781; Internet address, e2Letters@iftw.com; and CompuServe: 73361,265.* ■

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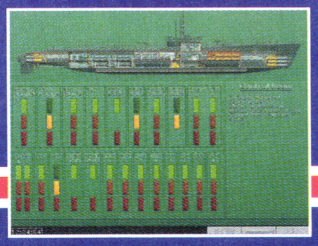
Technical Advisor William "Bud" Gruner commanded the submarine USS Skate during WWII, and was awarded the Navy Cross and the Silver Star. Commander Gruner provides narration of technical and tactical matters as well as personal anecdotes of his vast WWII experience.

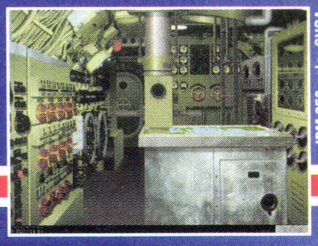
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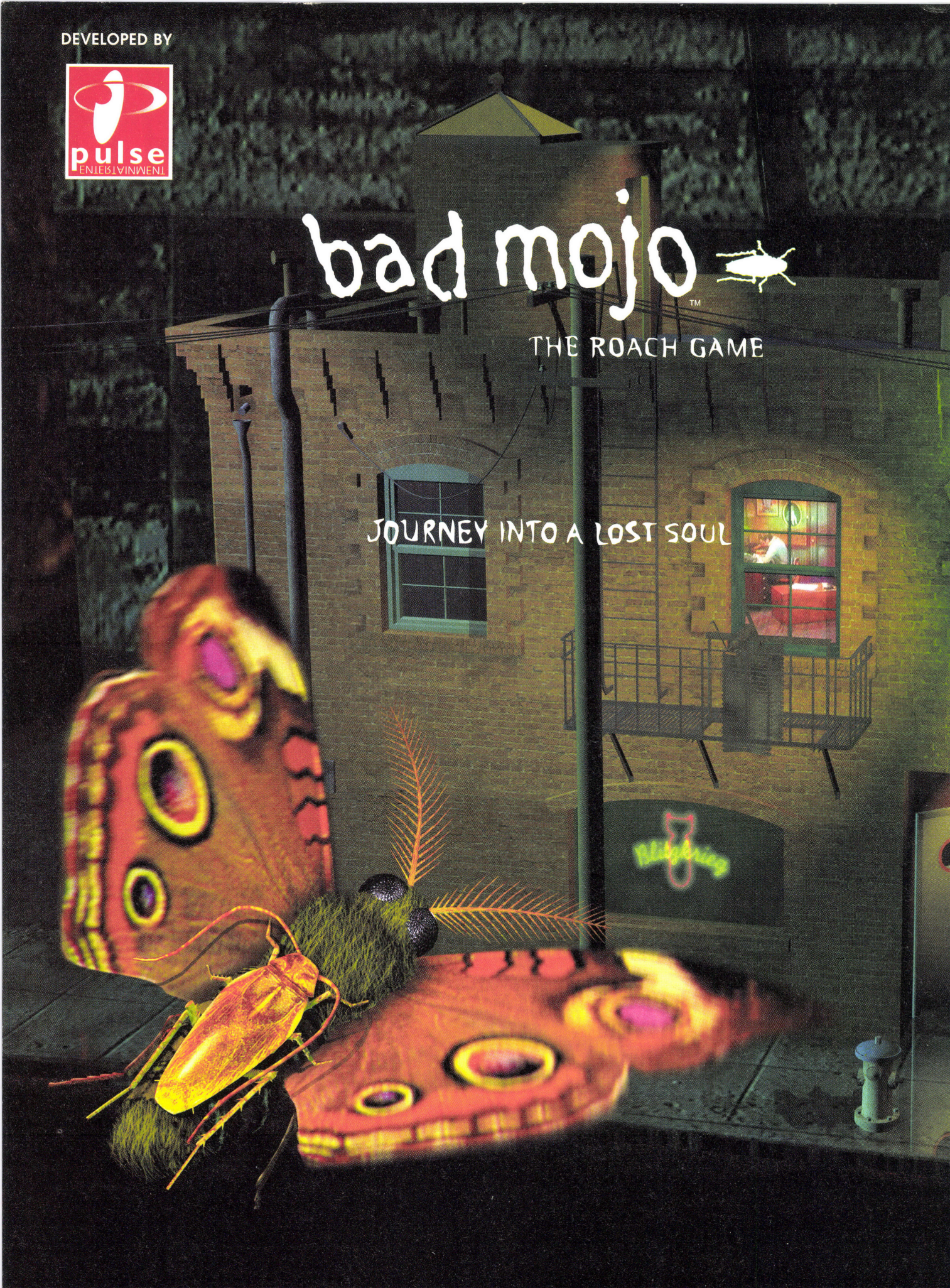




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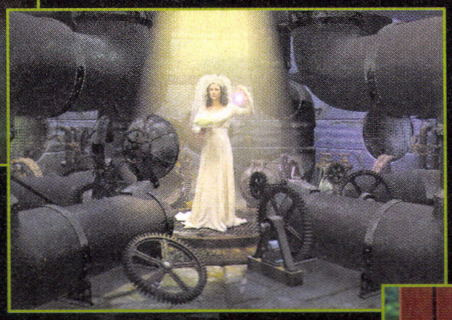
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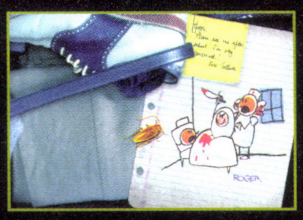
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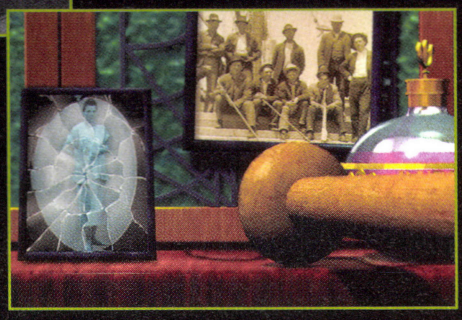

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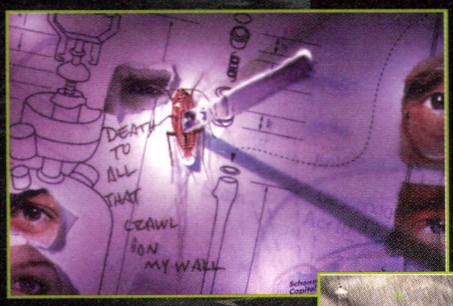
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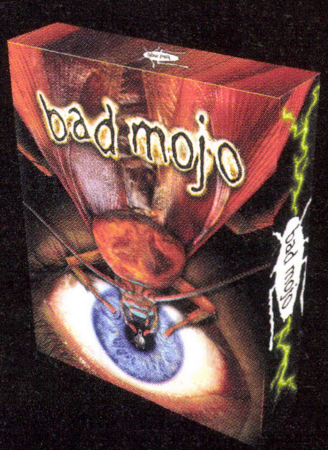
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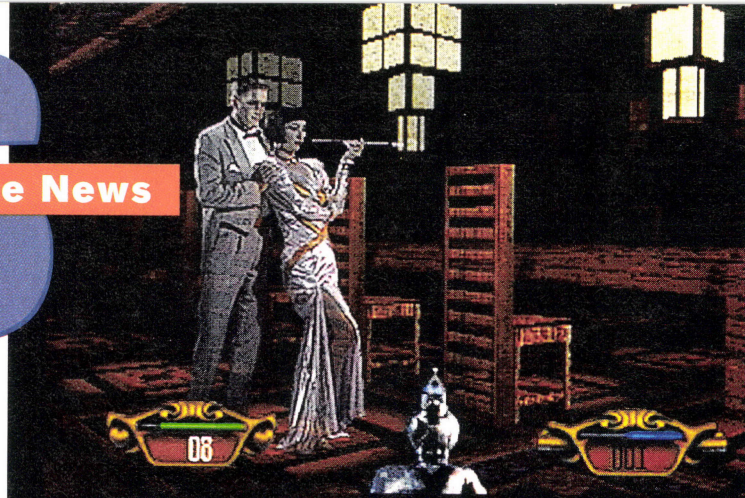
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NEWS

Game News



Last year's Killing Time from 3DO Studio will hit the PC this year.

From Consoles To Keyboards

When you think of Sega, 3DO, and Philips, PC games probably don't come to mind. Think again: The recent launch of Sega Soft—as well as new policies at Philips Media Software and 3DO—finds these dedicated platform gaming companies veering off in a decidedly PC direction.

Sega of America, which last year invested millions in its Saturn game system, is taking the plunge into the PC platform in earnest. Its PC software division, Sega PC, has already ported over Sega CD oldies like Tomcat Alley, but now Sega Soft, a joint venture between Sega Enterprises and Japanese software manufacturer CSK, will develop original games for simultaneous release on the Saturn and the PC. Look for 15 arcade and sports titles for the PC in '96, including several Sonic the Hedgehog games and World Series Baseball in early spring.



Look for Philips Media Games' CD-ROM adventure The Dame Was Loaded next month.

Philips became the first console maker to go PC when it faced disappointing sales of games for its CD-i system. With the launch of its Philips Media Games division in '89, CD-i titles such as International Tennis and most recently Burn:Cycle have moved to PC CD-ROM. Just around the corner, expect to see the CD-ROM adventure The Dame Was Loaded and the strategy/arcade game GearHeads.

According to Philips Media Software's senior vice president of marketing and sales, Leigh Alexander, console makers have little choice but to court the PC market. "Everybody is looking at the same set of statistics and seeing that the installed base for personal computers is huge," says Alexander. "These statistics can't be ignored."

Evidently, 3DO agrees. After licensing its 64-bit M2 technology to Matsushita for $100 million, 3DO will turn to publishing software for both the 3DO and PC. Expect a PC version of 3DO Studio's Killing Time this year, followed by original 3DO Studio titles for the PC and 3DO in '96.

Beyond software, 3DO is negotiating with major 3-D accelerator board companies to leverage its M2 technology in their upcoming boards, and M2 technology could appear in new computers via OEM deals with system manufacturers.

Long-term? Look for all three companies to get into Internet gaming. *—Bill Meyer*

Catapult Into PC Games

Dying for a Deathmatch? Wait no longer. Catapult Entertainment has unveiled a prerelease version of XBAND PC, a new nationwide Windows 95 PC gaming network featuring top hits like Doom II, Descent, Heretic, MechWarrior 2, HardBall 5, Super Street Fighter II, and Indy Car Racing.



XBAND PC promises fast action and multiplayer capabilities this summer.

Based on Catapult's online gaming network for Sega and Nintendo systems, XBAND PC offers direct modem-to-modem connections between players' computers. Instead of playing from a central gaming server with hordes of other people, you use Catapult's special software to directly link with your opponent. According to Catapult, this approach reduces delays during fast-paced action games. Right now, gamers are limited to one-on-one contests, but you'll be able to play up to five opponents at a time this summer.

Subscription fees are waived during the beta period, and long-distance play costs $3.95 an hour. Upon full launch in March, XBAND will charge monthly subscription fees consistent with the other services' pricing. Download the Windows 95 beta software from Catapult's Web site at http://www.xband.com. *–Willem Knibbe*

All Work and No Play

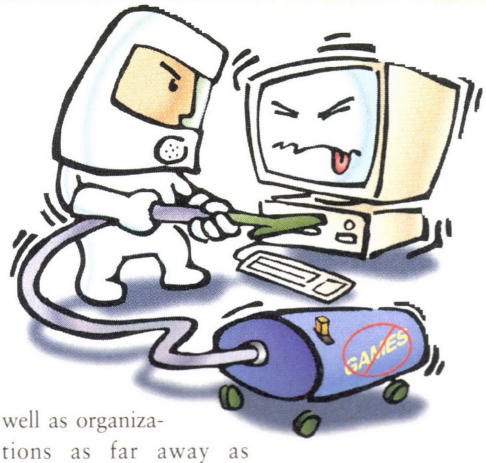


ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM VANDERHOOF

According to DVD Software, American employees squander $50 billion a year playing computer games at work. DVD plans to cash in on employer intolerance with its recently-released utility UnGame for Windows.

UnGame hunts down and kills some 3,100 different games, ferreting out fun on Windows, DOS, and OS/2 PCs. It can also target files on Novell, Windows NT, LAN Server, and Banyan Vines network servers and can even "reach through" a network to eliminate games on a computer's local hard disk.

The product has already "cleaned up" such companies as Walt Disney, Amoco, Monsanto, The Mississippi Workers Compensation Commission, and Oregon State University's College of Business, as well as organizations as far away as Australia, Austria, and Germany.

An UnGame file-server package is available for $60, but a shareware version of this killjoy resides in CompuServe's Novell User Library Forum (GO NOVUSER) in the file UNGAME20.ZIP.

Ironically, DVD's Donna Hollander admits that games live on her company's computers, but assures us that *no one* plays during business hours. Right. (DVD Software; 714-757-0615)—*Ann M. Marcus*

Rebel Assault II Cheat and Level Codes

To get a head start on the Empire, pause the Game, press Alt-V and try these Rebel II cheat modes.

Force Mode

Type "letgo" and then the "+" key to restore health.

+	Restore Health



May the Force be with you.

Yoda Power Mode

Type "isnotry" and then the following keys:

Esc	Skips Playable Level
Alt-J and 1-9 & A-F	Chapter Jump
Alt-P	Autoplay
Alt-M	Movie Mode

Standard Difficulty Pass Codes

Chapter 2: Bantha	**Chapter 10:** Artoo
Chapter 3: Katana	**Chapter 11:** Satal
Chapter 4: Dengar	**Chapter 12:** Lobue
Chapter 5: Pellaeon	**Chapter 13:** Deneba
Chapter 6: Ithull	**Chapter 14:** Sturm
Chapter 7: Stenness	**Chapter 15:** Crado
Chapter 8: Myrkr	**Finale:** Carrack
Chapter 9: Churba	

Game Goals

Novelist Harlan Ellison on his new game I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream, based on his classic story of the same name. (See our review on page 68.)



"The person who plays it will be slightly wiser, more able to use deductive logic. They'll have an opportunity to understand certain aspects of history and perhaps gain a greater sense of social responsibility, so that a sociopath like an O.J. Simpson won't ever again be spurred on with 'Go O.J.' or 'Don't Squeeze The Juice' signs as he tries to run away to Mexico."

Multiplayer Mayhem

If you liked Origin's Crusader: No Remorse but wished it had multiplayer support, you're in luck. Cinematix's multiplayer, action-shooter, Total Mayhem, published by Domark, is the next best thing. Lead six Freedom Fighters against the Interplanetary Resource Control in jungle and desert battles against 65 different enemies using ten different weapons, including a rocket launcher. The game will support up to eight players over a Windows 95 network as well as head-to-head play via modem. Get more information at Domark's Web site, http://www.domark.com/domark/. —*Bill Meyer*



Join several other players in some Total Mayhem from Domark.

scouting REPORT

- GTE Interactive has secured an official NCAA license and use of 64 Division I team names and logos for its **NCAA Championship Basketball** game. Look for it on shelves next month. (GTE Interactive; 800-483-8632; DOS CD)
- **Sierra On-Line** has acquired **Papyrus Design Group**, developers of NASCAR Racing and Indy Car Racing. Watch for several new titles from Sierra and Papyrus, including additional motorsport simulations throughout this year.
- Keep an eye on the sky for a boxed version of Kesmai's popular World War II online flight sim Air Warrior. Interactive Magic plans to release **Air Warrior 2**, which will let you battle computer opponents before you take on real online aviators, around the middle of this year. (Interactive Magic; 800-789-1534)
- For more fun with Heretic and Hexen, check out WizardWorks' **H!Zone**, featuring 11 new episodes and over 250 bonus levels. (WizardWorks; 612-559-5140; DOS CD, $39.99)
- From the makers of Gazillionaire comes the economic simulation **Zapitalism**. As a small shop owner on a remote island, you'll have to expand your import/export business. Look for it late this year. (LavaMind; 415-566-3808; Win 95 CD, $40)
- For hints, tips, and tricks to more than 200 PC games—including BioForge, Full Throttle, and FX Fighter—check out Microforum's **Solution CD '96** ($34.50). Also out now, Microforum's Windows 95 adventure game **Virtual Corporation**, gives you control via IBM voice recognition. (Microforum; 800-465-2323; Win 95 CD, $59.95)
- Golf enthusiasts should take a look at ThrustMaster's new **Pro Play Golf** control system, which lets players use their own clubs. (ThrustMaster; 503-639-3200; $799.95)

NEWS

Multimedia News



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

Digital Discounts

Do you think CD-ROMs cost too much? Surprisingly, a number of game and multimedia companies agree and are rocking the boat with discs that cost as little as $10. But what can you expect to get for a double sawbuck? And will these low-end discs help drive down prices on top titles? Well, it depends. While some discount discs are basically remainders of once-expensive titles, others were developed to sell for a bargain price.

Merchandising experts such as Essex Interactive Media, for example, scoop up first-quality products that may be past their prime, or that may have been coolly received the first time around. The products are then repackaged and remarketed through traditional software channels, record stores, and mass-market merchants such as K-Mart or Costco. No matter what the title originally sold for, Essex charges $9.99 a disc.

Other developers specialize in creating low-priced titles, often dismissed as shovelware. Take Expert Software, for example, which produces more than 100 game and multimedia titles covering everything from card games to space travel, all priced between $15 and $20. Arc Media, which has offices in Buffalo but produces titles in Taiwan, publishes $20 CD-ROMs—of inconsistent quality—on karate, concept cars, several types of Asian cooking, and a slew of equally unrelated "entertainment" topics.

Finally, bargain hunters shouldn't forget bundles. Sirius, for example, offers a number of versions of its incredibly popular 5 ft. 10 Pak, a fan-fold bundle of ten CD-ROM games and multimedia discs that stuff a couple of hot titles in with a bunch of filler. But at about $4 apiece ($39.95 for the pak), Sirius sells a lot of discs. Who knows, you may find a sleeper buried in there. (See "Buying In Bulk", *Electronic Entertainment*, October 1995, page 55.)

The $64 question, though, is how CD-ROM bargains will affect the price of grade-A titles. According to Ted Pine of market research firm Infotech, average CD-ROM prices are coming down; last year, they dropped about 10 percent and now average around $30 to $40. While prices for the top 2 percent to 3 percent of titles hold firm, Pine predicts the majority of titles could eventually end up in the bargain bin.

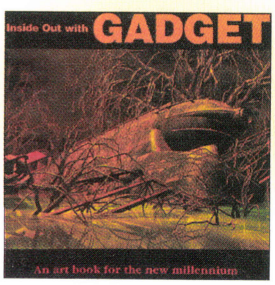
So how do you know if you've gotten your money's worth? Bruce Ryan of Dataquest suggests this rule of thumb: "You should expect to get an hour's worth of enjoyment for every $10 you spend on a CD-ROM title."

—Ann M. Marcus

The Art of the Game

Some computer games have such beautiful art that you almost forget about the game. Synergy Interactive's Gadget is one such title, with images so stunning that we awarded it the 1994 Murphy Award for Best Art (*Electronic Entertainment*, March 1995, page 51).

It seems we're not the only ones who think so. Synergy and Simon & Schuster have teamed up to publish *Inside Out with Gadget*, a striking paperback showcasing the techno-fantastic images of Gadget artist Haruhiko Shono. For the original game, Shono constructed a complex world and a visual story that spanned 19 years. However, the final version of the game required only two days' worth of his imagery; the $30 book presents the rest.



For the whole story on the Gadget universe, check out Simon & Schuster's book *Inside Out with Gadget*.

For even more Gadget graphica, pick up Gadget Trips/Mindscapes on laserdisc or videotape, which features 79 minutes of animation not originally found in the game. But wait—there's more! This spring, Simon & Schuster will publish *Gadget: The Third Force*, a novel set in the Gadget universe with an original story and new characters. (Synergy Interactive; 800-734-9466; $30)

–Christine Grech

Windows 95 And CD-ROMs

Windows 95 has yet to catch on with the PC entertainment masses, but how could it have? There are so few titles to choose from...

Total number of CD-ROM titles worldwide at the end of 1995: 16,762

Percent of these that are Windows 95 native: 1.2% (204 titles)

Percent of native Windows 95 titles that are consumer-oriented titles: 72% (148 titles)

Percent of native Windows 95 consumer titles that are games: 37% (55 titles)

Number of Windows 95 tutorial CD-ROMs: 30

Source: Infotech


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NEWS

news FLASH

■ **Surf This Disc**, Rykodisc's free new sight-and-sound-packed multimedia catalog on CD-ROM, features a storehouse of information on the company's vast selection of music CDs. Search it by artist name, genre, musical instrument, featured musician, or geographic origin. Each album entry features a full description, a song listing, and an audio sample; 75 also have an accompanying video clip. There's even a shopping form you can fill out and fax. And if you win the disc's Scavenger Hunt–answer 30 questions and send them to Ryko's World Wide Web site (**http://www.rykodisc.com**) by March 1–you could receive every CD Ryko and its associated labels make, nearly 450 of 'em. Pick up the catalog disc at Borders book stores and, soon, at several record chains; you can also get it by mail for a $3 shipping/handling charge. (Rykodisc; 800-232-7385; Win/Mac CD; free)

■ **CompUSA** wants to take the intimidation and confusion out of shopping for new hardware and software. Orlando, Florida recently welcomed one of CompUSA's new format computer superstores. The 26,750 square-foot outlet includes a play area where adults can "test-drive" leading entertainment and productivity titles. A new CompKids area–designed as a rocket ship with computer stations sized proportionately for smaller hands–lets children and their parents try out the growing number of edutainment titles for youngsters. CompUSA plans to add a number of new "shopper-friendly" superstores to the chain nationwide and retrofit the existing ones to meet the new standards.



STAR TALK with B.B. King

B. King has been singing and playing the blues for decades. Along the way, he's introduced this uniquely American art form to all kinds of new audiences, and he's doing it again with **On The Road with B.B. King,** *a new CD-ROM from MCA Records (see our review in "The Stars Come Out" on page 36.)* PC Entertainment *editor in chief Fredric Paul spoke with the blues master to find out what B.B. brings to multimedia—and what multimedia brings to the blues.*



Jump on the bus with B.B. King for an up-close-and-personal look at the blues.

***PC Entertainment*: What was your involvement with the project?**

B.B. King: When you first put it in your CD-ROM, there I am, big ol' me sittin' on the bus. I introduce myself and ask you to come on and get on the bus. And then I start talkin' to you about who I am, and then I ask you, "Can you drive?" And—well, I don't really ask you, I kinda give you an order to drive.

And then I say, "Well, if you take the mouse and you touch this here, we'll go this way," and so on. And I continue that throughout the whole CD-ROM.

***PCE*: What does your CD-ROM bring to the blues?**

B.B.: I can say it and be honest with you: If this one does what it seemed to do when we were doing it, it will be one of the finest things that's ever been done toward the blues.

What I'm sharing there, is like I tell young musicians, "When you're learning to play, don't just try to learn to play the blues, don't try to learn to play jazz, rock and roll, country, or any one particular something. You try and learn to play well, and then you can be yourself playing anything you want to play."

So that's kind of where the CD-ROM is. It has to do with blues and blues music, but there are people that are in it that are jazz, country, and so on.

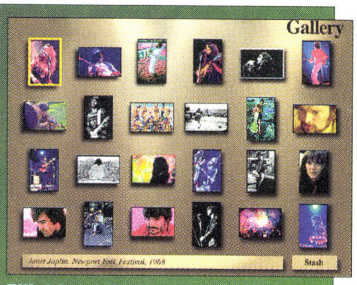
***PCE*: What will blues fans learn from this disc?**

B.B.: You'd learn a lot of things that you've never heard me talk about. I talk openly about blues. And it's got music in it. We're playing a lot of my tunes, at least 15 or 20 of 'em.

***PCE*: What's your favorite part of the disc?**

B.B.: It's hard for me to say. But Indianola is nice, and we visit Beale Street, and we visit Lucille's place in cyberspace. That's not a real place, but I thought it should be. A lot of my friends are in there and I also show about the guitar. It's an interesting thing, even to me.

By The Time We Get (Back) To Woodstock...



Elliot Landy's Woodstock vision lets you...be there now.

That corporate-sponsored yup-a-thon known as Woodstock '94 just didn't have the juice of the idealistic gathering that "happened" 25 years earlier in upstate New York.

In an attempt to capture the essence of the original event's enchantment, Elliott Landy, the official photographer of the Woodstock Music Festival, is creating Elliott Landy's Woodstock Vision. The disc, based on Landy's book of the same name that featured nearly 200 of his photographs, will pack even more pictures, video clips, a timeline, a guided tour (by Landy), and an original soundtrack composed by The Band's Garth Hudson. You'll even be able to store your favorite images in a virtual "Stash Box" to create a custom psychedelic slide show or screen saver.

Landy says he isn't trying to recreate the famous concert, but rather to capture the spirit of the generation that gave it life. (Panasonic Software; 800-332-5368; $50)

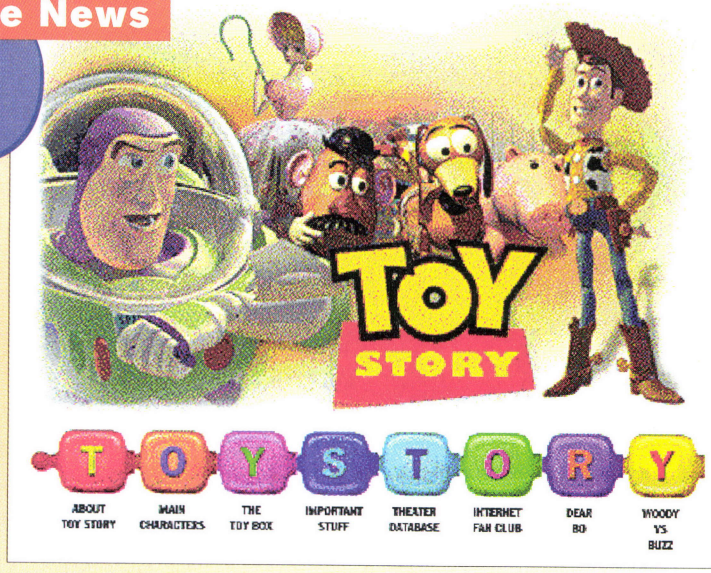
–Christine Grech


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NEWS

Online News

NOW SHOWING!



This Web screen serves up lots of extras for one of Hollywood's biggest hits of the season.

Web Site Story

Pixar Animated Studios took a big gamble with lots of Steve Jobs' money, and it won big: *Toy Story*, the completely computer-generated feature-length film that Pixar produced for Disney, has turned out to be a box office bonanza. Disney also boosted recognition of *Toy Story* with a World Wide Web site that has claimed tens of thousands of hits since the film's early-December release.

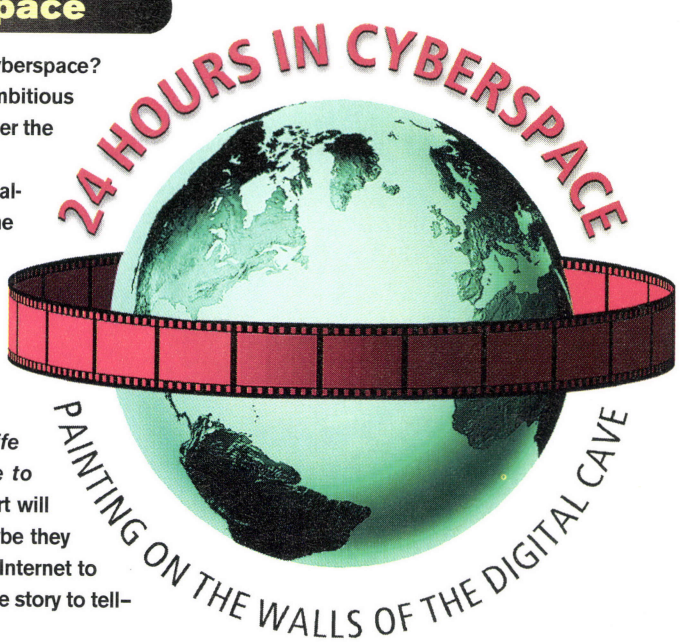
Little wonder: Go to **http://www.toystory.com**, and you'll find one of the most fully outfitted movie-based Web sites yet. You name it, and they've put it up—downloadable movie clips, audio samples, and still photos; importable icons and wallpaper for your PC; a fully animated Concentration-style game done in Shockwave, the innovative Web application from Macromedia that allows motion on Web pages; and—in what must be a first for a Web site—coloring book pages that you can download for your kids. You can even e-mail the movie's Bo Peep character or listen to Woody and Buzz (the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen, respectively) duke it out via sound clips.

Although Web sites for Hollywood releases are the norm these days, the *Toy Story* site may be a precursor of a move toward more attractions, better technology, and stronger attempts to create a synergy between a movie and its Internet presence. David Lane, president of 2-Lane Media, which developed the site, says the computer-based nature of *Toy Story* and the release of Shockwave made the funky content a natural: "We saw an opportunity to have fun and do some things above and beyond the typical Web site." —*Donald St. John*

A Day in the Life of Cyberspace

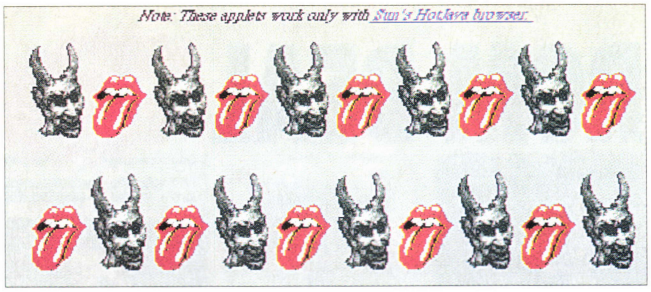
Where better to chronicle the world of cyberspace than *in* cyberspace? That's the concept behind 24 Hours in Cyberspace, an ambitious project accumulating photographs of people who reside all over the physical world but also "live," at times, in a virtual world.

On February 8, hundreds of professional and student photojournalists from Washington to Katmandu will snap people who make online connections a part of their everyday lives. The photographers will then digitize and upload the images to a central site in San Francisco, where ten teams of graphic designers, editors, and Web authors will build Web pages to contain the photos, along with descriptions and additional Web links to related sites of interest–all on the same day.



The award-winning photographer behind the *A-Day-In-The-Life* book series as well as the *From Alice to Ocean* and *Passage to Vietnam* books and CD-ROMs, Rick Smolan, hopes this huge effort will help us understand how online activities fit into people's lives: Maybe they fell in love via e-mail, found a job or career there, or simply use the Internet to expand their world and "meet" other Netsurfers. If you have an online story to tell–or rather, show–check Against All Odds' Web site.

The project will serve as the official launch of the Internet 1996 World Exposition, and on March 15, Smolan plans to mount a permanent, expanded Web site. Look for an associated book, CD-ROM, and television documentary in the fall. (Against All Odds Productions; http://www.cyber24.com) *–Donald St. John*



Scary, but true: Java makes the infamous Rolling Stones tongue logo dance.

off the WIRE

■ Apple is the latest outfit to join the video-over-the-Net parade. The company will mount **QuickTime Live** events that capture entertainment happenings in real time. The program, which kicked off with a San Francisco New Year's Eve bash featuring Santana, offers live video feeds for people connecting at ISDN speed or faster; if you're running at slower speeds (say, via a 14.4 or 28.8Kbps modem connection) you can still see photos, scan 360-degree QuickTime VR environments, and download audio and video samples. Look for a QuickTime Live page from the Sundance Film Festival starting January 18 at **http://live.apple.com**.

■ CompuServe offered **free accounts to all of this year's presidential candidates,** saying it wanted to further the election process by bringing it into cyberspace. However, the service had to back off temporarily when a wave of news stories suggested that the offer amounted to a campaign contribution that candidates couldn't legally accept. The offer now awaits a ruling from the Federal Election Commission. In the meantime, the offer has been extended to all candidates in statewide races, who aren't bound by the federal election rules. GO ELECTION for CompuServe's coverage of the primaries.

■ If The Spot brings *Melrose Place* to the Web, does that mean that **The East Village** wants to be *Central Park West*?

continued on page 21

The Web Gets Moving

If you haven't heard about **Java** yet, listen up—you're missing an exciting new Internet development. Java is a Sun Microsystems programming language that lets Internet programmers create small pop-up programs on World Wide Web pages. These miniature applications, or applets, pop up, do their thing—such as run a short animation—and go away. They're already creating a stir on the Web even as they appear on entertainment-based pages everywhere.

Rolling Stones fans were among the earliest beneficiaries of Java; the band's site at **http://www.stones.com** has had several Java applets for a couple of months. You can watch the famous Stones tongue dance, or visit the band in the Java Lounge. HotWired users in a chatty mood can find Java applets at ClubWired; go to **http://hotwired com**. And clnet's new shareware.com site (see "C-ing the Net," page 21) uses Java to show you what's available on the huge site. To view applets, you need Netscape Navigator 2.0 or Sun's HotJava browser (available at **http://java. sun.com**).

Beyond the big corporate sites, scads of independent programmers are writing fun Java applets. Find a listing of games, animations, and other content at **http://www.gamelan.com**. And get your typing fingers ready: Netscape and Sun developed a scripting language, JavaScript, that will let nonprogrammers do Java. Even Microsoft has licensed Java for its Internet Explorer browser. (Sun Microsystems: **http://java.sun.com**)

—Donald St. John

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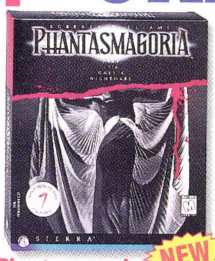
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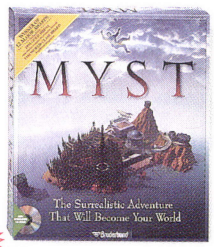
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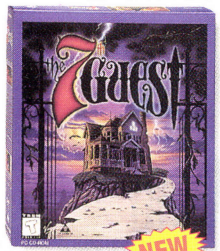
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Adventure 5004502
WIN3.1 DOS | 486/66 | 8mb | M



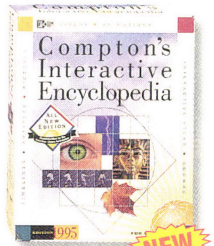
Myst
Interact. Game 5004304
WIN3.1 MAC | 386/33 LCII | 4mb | M



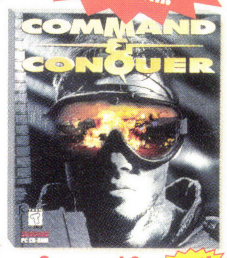
Mechwarrior 2 NEW
Arcade Style 5043609
DOS | 486/66 | 8mb | M



Full Throttle NEW
Adventure 5046404
DOS | 486/33 | 8mb | M K



Dark Forces NEW
Arcade Style 5046503
DOS MAC | 386/33 LCIII | 8mb | M K



Command & Conquer NEW
Strategy Game 5050208
DOS | 486/66 | 8mb | M

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How To Select CD-ROMs For Your System.

WIN3.1 MAC	386 LCIII	4mb	M J	P K
SYSTEM	CPU	RAM	PERIPH.	

SYSTEM Button indicates the available operating environment(s) for a given selection: DOS (for PC), Windows (for PC), Macintosh.

CPU Button indicates the *minimum* processor required. If a title is available in PC and Macintosh formats, the top half of this button represents PC system requirements and the bottom half represents Macintosh system requirements. Note: Ser.=Series, Class.=Classic, Pent.=Pentium. For Mac – LC series includes LC 475, Performa 475, Quadra, Centris, Powerbook 180C, IIFX or better.

RAM Button indicates the *minimum* amount of RAM required.

PERIPHERALS Button indicates required peripherals. M=mouse, J=joystick, K=keyboard, P=printer.

For all titles, the *minimum* system requirements recommended (unless otherwise indicated) are: Hardware: SVGA monitor (256 colors), sound card, 40MB hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive. Operating System: DOS 5.0, Windows 3.1, Macintosh System 7.0.

Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego Deluxe
Children's Ed. 5016605
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 CLASS. | 4mb | M

7th Guest
Interact. Game 5004700
DOS MAC | 386/33 LCIII | 4 mb | M

Microsoft Flight Simulator NEW
Flight Simulator 5050604
DOS | 486/33 | 8mb | M K

The Lost Mind Of Dr. Brain
Children's Ed. 5037502
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb | M

Star Trek: The Next Generation: AFinal Unity
Adventure 5050505
DOS | 486/33 | 8mb | M

King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride
Adventure 5024401
WIN3.1 MAC | 386/33 LCIII | 4mb | M

Doom II
Arcade Style 5021506
DOS MAC | 386/33 LCII | 4mb | M J K

Astronomica
Astronomy 5033600
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb | M

The Bible
Bible 5031703
WIN3.1 | 386 | 4mb | M

Instant Internet Access
Internet Guide 5031000
WIN3.1 | 386 | 4mb | M

Microsoft Bookshelf
Gen. Reference 5009402
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 LCII | 4mb | M K

The Way Things Work
Children's Ed. 5028402
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 LCII | 4mb | M

AAA Trip Planner
Travel 5011606
WIN3.1 | 386 | 4mb | M P

FX Fighter
Arcade Style 5045109
DOS | 486/33 | 4mb | M

PTS Official Windows '95 Tutorial
Computer Tutor. 5043807
WIN3.1 | 386/33 | 4mb | M

The Random House Kid's Encyclopedia
Children's Ed. 5027909
WIN3.1 | 486 | 4mb | M

Jumpstart First Grade
Children's Ed. 5045901
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb | M

Beer Hunter
Gen. Interest 5040803
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb | M

Microsoft Cinemania '95
Video Guide 5012703
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 LCIII | 4mb | M K

Daedalus Encounter
Interact. Game 5034707
WIN3.1 MAC | 486/33 LCIII | 8mb | M K

Casper Brainy Book NEW
Children's Ed. 5048905
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb 8mb | M

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing
Typing Tutor 5015102
WIN3.1 | 386 | 4mb | M K

Jumpstart Kindergarten
Children's Ed. 5027701
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 LCIII | 1mb 4mb | M

Quicken CD NEW
Home/Personal 5030101
WIN3.1 MAC | 486 LCIII | 4mb | M

Corel Gallery
Clip Art Lib. 5010301
WIN3.1 | 386 | 2mb | M P K

Nascar Racing
Driving Sim. 5001300
DOS | 386/40 | 8mb | M J K

Descent
Arcade Style 5046602
DOS | 386/33 | 4mb | M

Martial Arts Explorer NEW
Historical 5049804
WIN3.1 MAC | 386/33 LCIII | 4mb | M

Dr. Ruth's Encyclopedia Of Sex
Home/Personal 5027602
WIN3.1 | 486 | 4mb | M

Compton's Encyclopedia
Encyclopedia 5046008
WIN3.1 MAC | 386 LCII | 4mb | M

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☐ Entertainment ☐ Education (includes children's titles) ☐ Edutainment ☐ Productivity

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Important! Did you remember to choose PC or Mac? Will your selections run on your system?

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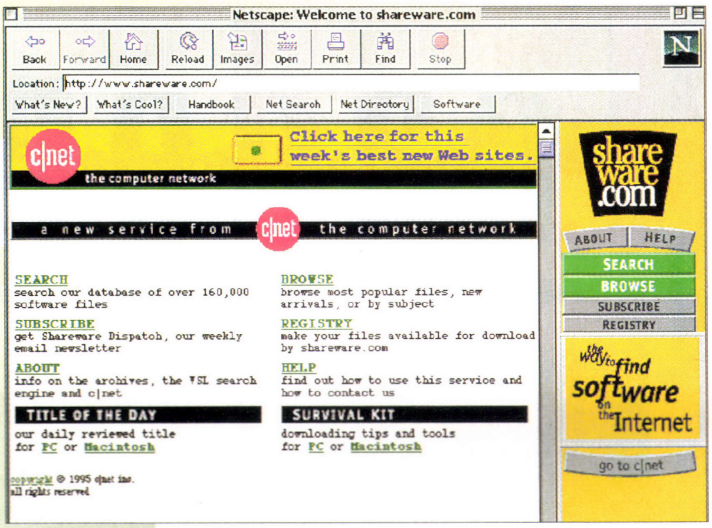
NEWS

off the WIRE

We hope not. This latest cybersoap follows the travails of 17 young denizens of the Big Apple through the now-usual mix of audio and video clips, photos, and hyperlinked text narrative. Check it out at **http://www.theeastvillage.com**.

■ Microsoft says it was happy with the performance of its **Microsoft Network** (MSN) when it hit its temporary membership cutoff of 500,000. Surprise! Microsoft has decided to continue membership signups after all...the better to accommodate everyone who got Windows 95 for Christmas.

Your entrée into a world of more shareware than you could ever use.



C-ing the Net

It seems **C|net** would like to be more than the leading television show about the Interactive Era; it wants to be the Web site of record, too. The San Francisco–based outfit has added a pair of powerful new enticements to its mix of Net news, features, and links.

One is a news radiocast about Internet developments using RealAudio. "What we want to be is the main source for news about the Internet itself, and right now we're the only site where you can hear daily news and developments," says clnet president Kevin Wendle. The site includes commentaries from clnet hosts Richard Hart and Gina St. John, plus other regular clnet contributors.

Shareware.com, the second new clnet attraction, should prove popular for people looking for Net freebies. The site at **http://www.shareware.com** consolidates the richest shareware/freeware sites for games, applications, and Net tools into one easily searchable package. One of the earliest sites to take advantage of Netscape Navigator 2.0, it even has a nifty Java applet to tell you what you'll find there. Gamers will especially appreciate the PC games archive at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. (clnet; 415-395-7800; **http://www.cnet.com**)

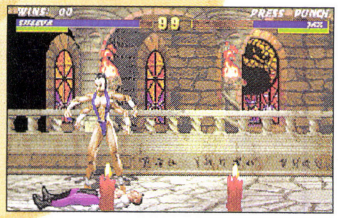
—Donald St. John

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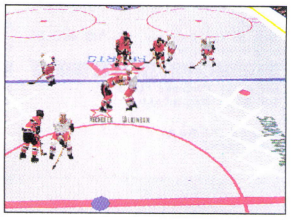


Leader Board

The best-selling PC and Mac games and multimedia entertainment software



Mortal Kombat 3 stomps in at No. 6 on the PC Games list.



NHL '96 breaks the ice at No. 8 on the PC Games chart.

PC Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** Upgraded graphics and new features takes this hugely popular flight sim to the top. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	2	4	★★★★
2	**Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this aging game near the top of the Board. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	4	18	★★★★★
3	**Command & Conquer** Engage the evil Hand of Nod behind enemy lines in more than a dozen missions in this action-oriented strategy game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	7	2	★★★
4	**Phantasmagoria** Adrienne's dream home in the country turns into a hellish nightmare in Sierra's seven-disc, full-motion-video adventure. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win/DOS CD; $69.95)	1	3	★★★★1/2
5	**The Ultimate Doom Thy Flesh Consumed** All three original episodes of Doom, as well as nine perilous new levels on one action-packed CD-ROM. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS CD; $30)	3	3	–
6	**Mortal Kombat 3** Deal finishing moves to old and new adversaries, such as Sub-Zero and Stryker, in the ultimate version of the arcade and cartridge favorite. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $55)	–	1	★★★★★
7	**Doom II** This hair-raising sequel has more than 30 levels, 7 hellish new creatures, and a double-barreled shotgun. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS, DOS CD; street price $40–$50)	8	12	★★★★★
8	**NHL '96** Superior game play and thoughtful details make this hockey sim an action-packed, realistic ice-breaker. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	–	1	★★★★1/2
9	**Road & Track Presents: Need for Speed** Climb behind the wheel of one of eight dream machines, including the Lamborghini Diablo. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	–	1	★★★★
10	**MechWarrior 2** Align with the mighty Wolf or Jade Falcon Clan to do battle in an assortment of awesome Mechs. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS CD; $59.95)	5	3	★★★★1/2

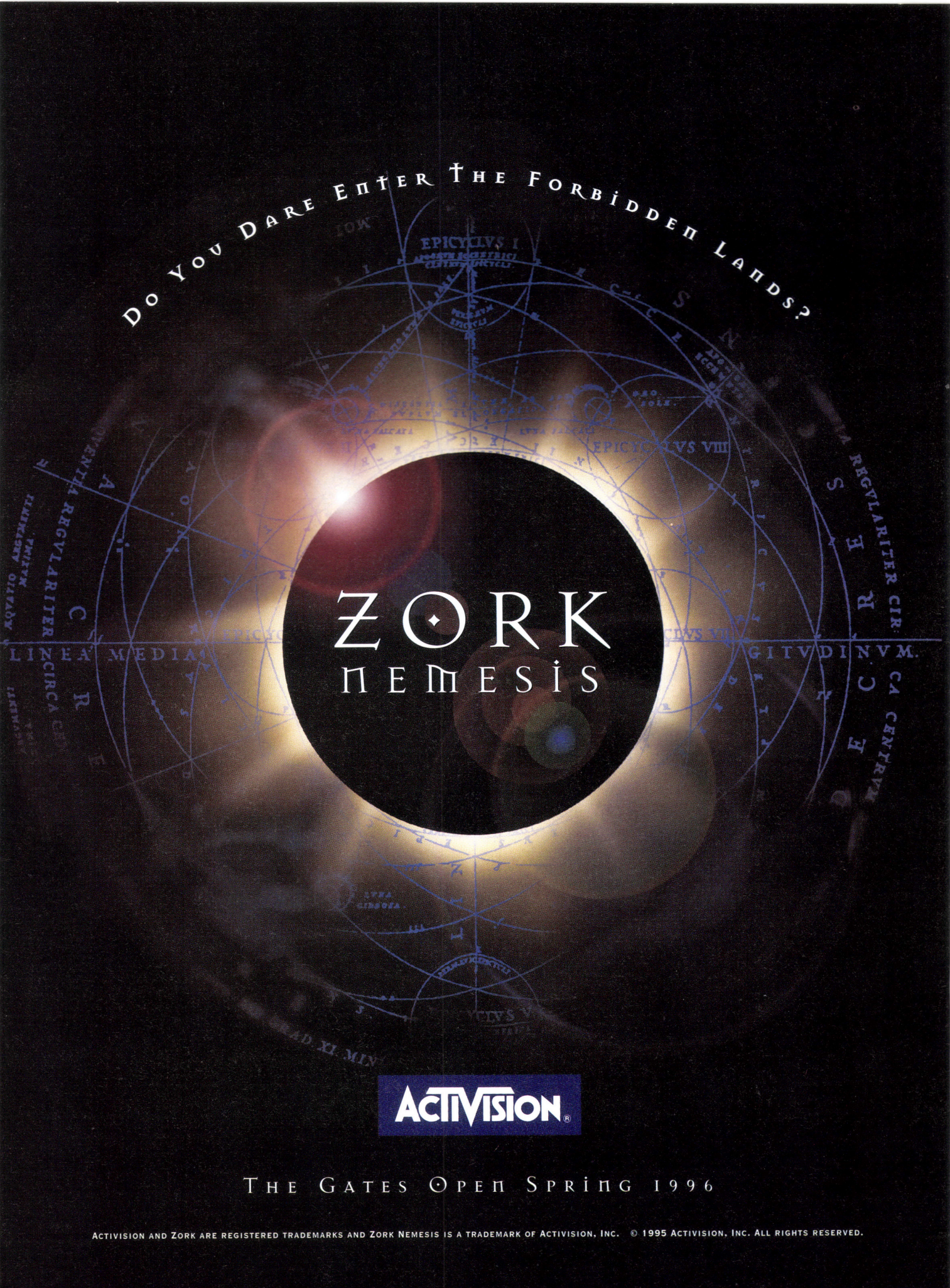
Mac Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Doom II** Doom arrives on the Mac in this hair-raising sequel, complete with more than 30 levels and 7 hellish new creatures. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; Mac, Mac CD; street price $40–$50)	1	4	★★★★1/2
2	**Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this aging puzzle game near the top of the Mac chart. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Mac CD; $54.95)	2	23	★★★★★
3	**Dark Forces** A clever twist on the Doom concept, featuring more strategy and a cast of *Star Wars* characters—now for the Mac. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; street price $44.95)	3	4	★★★★1/2
4	**Rebel Assault** Intense 3-D graphics and furious *Star Wars* action highlight this arcade-style classic. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; $19.95)	5	12	★★★★
5	**SimCity 2000** Build your own city of the future with this improved version of the classic urban-simulation game. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac, $49.95; Mac CD, $69.95)	6	23	★★★★★
6	**Links Pro CD Macintosh** Photorealistic courses and players as well as humorous sound bites set this ground-breaking golf game apart. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; Mac; $69.95)	10	9	★★★★
7	**Top Ten Mac Pak** Ten of Electronic Arts' golden oldies in an assortment of categories, including PGA Tour II and Chuck Yeager's Air Combat. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; Mac CD; street price $29.95-$34.95)	7	3	★★★★
8	**Full Throttle** As a renegade biker and leader of the Polecats, you race to stop the evil Adrian Ripburger from taking over Corley Motors. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; $50)	–	1	★★★★1/2
9	**SimCity 2000 CD Collection** Complete with SimCity 2000, Great Disasters Vol. One, and The Urban Renewal Kit, you'll be a master planner in no time. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac CD; $59.95)	8	3	★★★★★
10	**Caesar's Palace** Venture to Vegas and try your luck at blackjack, craps, roulette, video poker, and even horse racing. (MacPlay; 800-874-4607; Mac; $19.99)	9	3	–

Multimedia Entertainment Titles

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Microsoft Encarta** Experience the world through video segments, audio clips, animation, and tons of text in this high-tech encyclopedia. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, Mac CD; $54.95)	2	20	★★★★1/2
2	**After Dark Windows 95** Berkeley Systems' tribute to Windows 95 includes new modules and features. (Berkeley Systems; 800-344-5541; Win 95 CD; $29.95)	–	2	–
3	**Disney's Animated StoryBook: Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree** Introduce your children to Pooh Bear in one of his classic misadventures. (Disney Interactive; 800-688-1520; Win CD, Mac CD; $32.95)	3	2	★★★★1/2
4	**Street Atlas USA** Clear maps and flexible controls make finding your destination easy; you can even find an address armed with only a phone number. (DeLorme Mapping; 800-452-5931; Win CD/Win 95 CD; $79)	–	3	★★★★1/2
5	**Dr. Seuss's ABC's** Favorites Icabod and Izzy host this alphabet soup, complete with silly characters and clever animations. (Living Books; 800-776-4724; Win/Mac CD, Win 95 CD, Power Mac CD; $37)	–	1	★★★★★

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games and multimedia entertainment titles in 1,300 retail stores for October 1995. It excludes CD "packs" that contain both games and multimedia titles, generally composed of older products. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data



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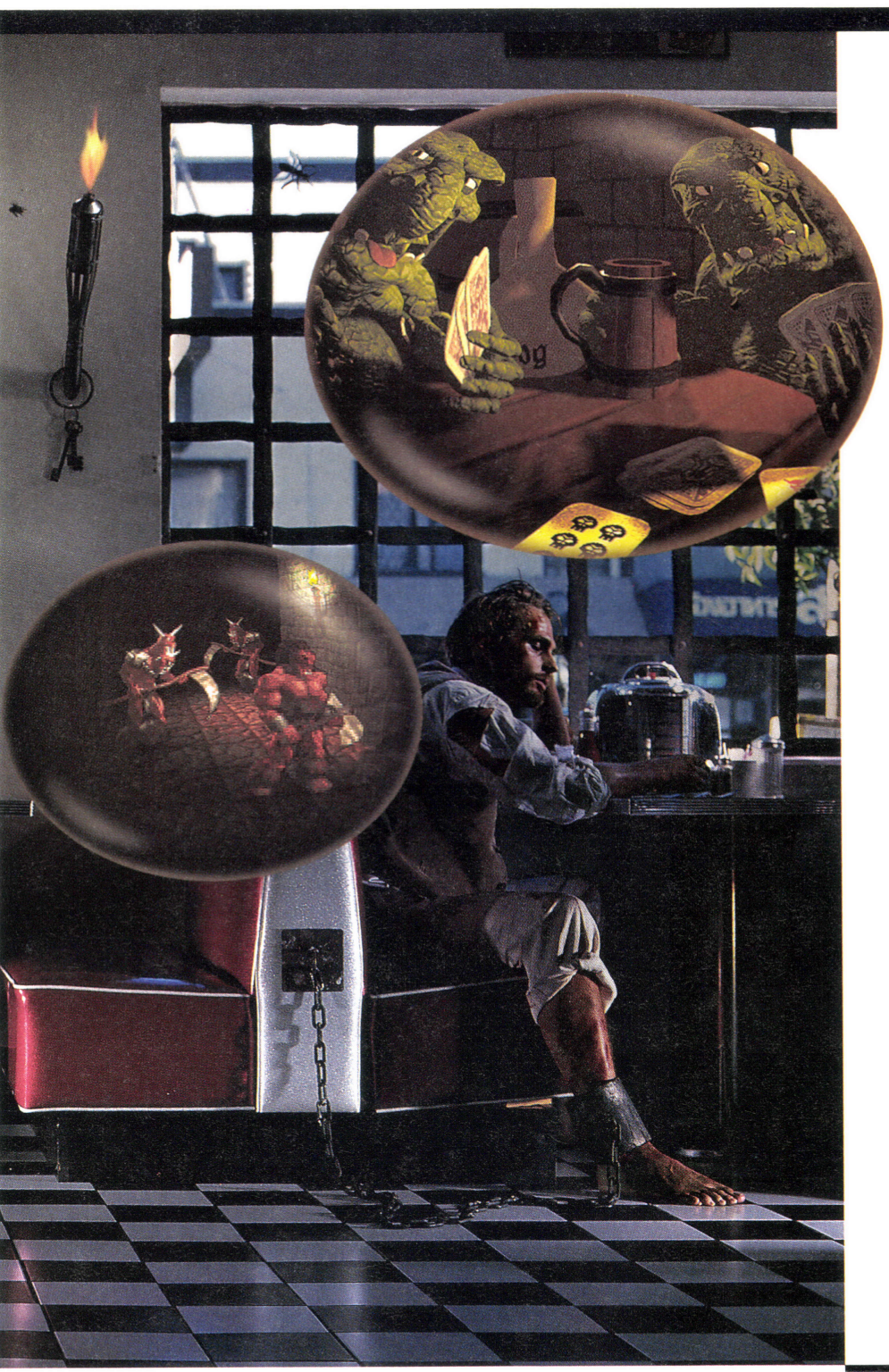






RP

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What's next?

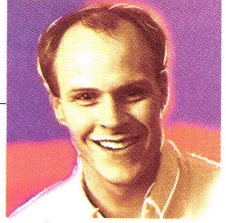
Here's a switch. An RPG where you play the monsters (plenty of 'em). The fair-haired, blue-eyed heroes try to steal your treasure. You manage the dungeon (first or third person point of view) and hunt them down. Then maul them. It's even 8-player networkable. Happy feasting.

DUNGEON KEEPER

YOU'RE THE MONSTER

PC-CD

(for an interactive demo) http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.html



Christopher Lindquist

Power Mad

Minimum System Requirements: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA

Recommended System Requirements: Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, 2MB Super VGA

If you've read this magazine for a while, you probably realize that The Ref doesn't disapprove of game makers who push existing hardware limits while trying to create great entertainment experiences. Sure, that means some players will either have to upgrade their old machine or miss out on the fun, but that's life in the world of computers. My old 286/16, which cost me $1,700 in the late '80s, hit the scrap heap long ago; my current midrange Pentium system faces the same fate in the coming months as I once again pay the price for my Wintel addiction.

However, I've recently seen a disturbing trend that has me wondering if things have gotten a bit out of hand. Game makers who once seemed to be aiming for the meat of the high-end market with their new releases now seem to be shooting ahead of the curve with games that merely run adequately on Pentium 90s with 8MB of RAM.

We've even had a couple of betas arrive recently that really came to life only when running on a Pentium 133 with 16MB of RAM. (Yeah, the game makers may fix these performance problems before release, but don't bet on it.) Worse, practically all of the Windows 95 titles we've seen suggest 16MB of RAM as a good amount of space in which to play. Judging by some of their performances on 8MB machines, you'd better have that extra memory if you hope to actually enjoy your new game.

Game makers are shooting ahead of the curve with games that merely run adequately on Pentium 90s with 8MB of RAM.

That, my friends, is an expensive proposition. Upgrading today's 4MB or 8MB 486/66 to a Pentium OverDrive with 16MB of memory could cost you between $500 and $700, depending on local prices and whether you'll buy mail order or not. Worse yet, even the fastest OverDrive processors don't have the horsepower to keep up with the most power-hungry games. That means you'll need a PCI-based motherboard upgrade sometime soon, which will also probably require new PCI local-bus video and drive controller cards as well. So there goes another few hundred bucks.

Now, I'm not going to be the one to tell game makers to stop spending time and money building wares for these uber-machines they love so much. I don't have to be. The market can tell them that with sluggish sales or scores of returns for games that simply won't play on the majority of home machines. No, there's another solution for players who don't want—or can't afford—to upgrade.

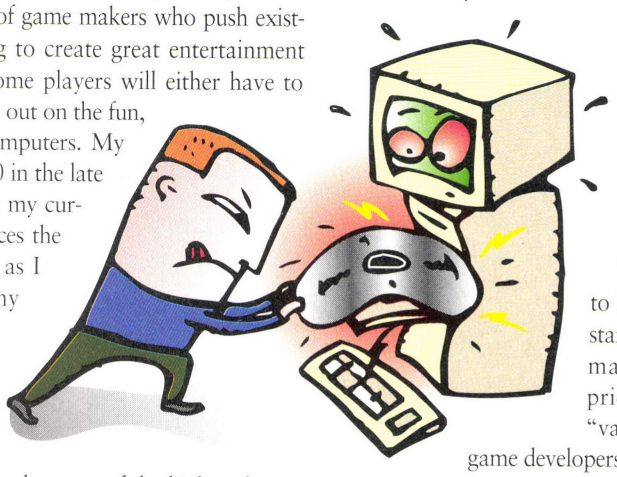


ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

Don't buy the latest games.

You've got other options. Perhaps to hedge their bets, game makers have started re-releasing older games. Some makers list the titles as "budget priced," while others call them the "value line." But whatever the name, game developers are beginning to ship games—good games in some cases—for prices well below the normal $40 or $50 they charge for the latest releases.

That's good news for gamers looking to avoid an immediate system upgrade. Never played Comanche: Maximum Overkill? Now you can for just $24. Thought Accolade's Cyclemania, Hardball 3, or Unnecessary Roughness '95 looked pretty good, but you didn't have the dough to pick them up when they were fresh? You can find them at some stores these days for less than $10. For less than $30, you can pick up a six-disc pack from LucasArts that includes such hits as Day of the Tentacle, Sam and Max Hit the Road, and a sampler of Rebel Assault. Gone are the days when game makers simply relegated old titles to some dusty archive, never to be seen again.

Of course, you need to be careful: Some so-called bargains aren't really bargains. Instead, they're just crappy titles that didn't sell well at full price, so the distributor tries to fire-sale a few of them out of his warehouse. But if you look around, you'll find some gems. To help you choose, you can often find reviews of older games in back issues of game magazines (like ours, of course), as well as get advice online from other players. Sure, they may not be the hottest thing on the market today, but you should enjoy them just the same.

Who knows, maybe you'll upgrade to a Pentium Pro in a year or so—right when today's hot hits are rolling onto the discount shelves.

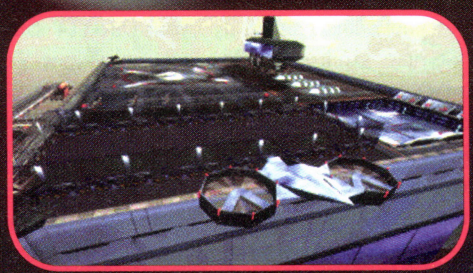
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Donald St. John

Web TV

If things on the Internet continue the way they've been going, Wirehead may have to change his name to Tube Man.

You may recall Tube Man, my predecessor in this space, who mused about the future of interactive TV. Unfortunately, he didn't have a whole lot to write about, as it seems as if that industry has been mired in testing since the days of Marconi. All the while, the Internet has grown, and people have spent a lot of time and effort figuring out how to get video across the Net. Early efforts such as Mbone and CU-SeeMe led the way, and now a second generation of technologies may make TV a reality on your computer.

Three developments are particularly promising. Silicon Valley's VDOnet says it can push video through the Net so that you'll get a decent picture even at 28.8Kbps, today's basic speed standard for modems. At that rate, it outclasses CU-SeeMe and Xing's Streamworks (which are themselves likely to improve), but is it enough to make us run from our TV sets?

Meanwhile, @home, another Silicon Valley startup, plans a cable-modem test in Sunnyvale, Calif., designed to jack up Net transmission rates by a factor of thousands. At that speed, you won't have to worry much about video compression; you'll just receive the signal like you do through your cable TV now. But at what cost? @home is talking about a subscription fee of $30 a month, but that won't include installation, adapters for computers, or other setup costs. And I don't trust the future of an inexpensive Net to the likes of John Malone and other cable moguls.

Anyway, neither development has the sheer ingenuity of Intercast, the new Intel scheme endorsed by a consortium of companies you've definitely heard of (see Online News, January 1996, page 20). Intercast doesn't bother with the narrow bandwidth of phone lines; rather, it just sticks World Wide Web data *in the TV signal itself*, at ISDN speed. Get a computer with an Intercast board inside, and it'll be able to pick up a TV signal; you can watch Jay Leno up in one area of your screen and yack about the show in real time below it. With your own Net connection, you can click from links on that page or open another browser window and go out onto the Net—without losing speed in either connection.

Watch Jay Leno in one part of your screen and yack about the show in real time below it.

This may well be the direction that "interactive TV" goes: Rather than making interactive video that requires special set-top boxes, you keep the basic video one-way and let the interactivity happen on an already-mature platform. (The idea, in fact, was sparked by an Intel engineer who plugged into **alt.tv.melrose-place** and noticed how much conversation took place when the show was on TV—a phenomenon of all the hippest shows now.) It's not a perfect situation: You still watch a small picture—albeit up close and on a better picture tube. Moreover, it doesn't bring the Web to you in any real sense—just whichever pages are associated with the site that you're picking up. Your current Web connection still has to do the rest of the work.



This, more or less, is how your Web browser will look with Intercast.

Another troubling thing about Intercast is that Intel doesn't aim, at least at first, to manufacture Intercast-capable tuner boards for existing machines. Although someone will undoubtedly fill that gap pronto, it's another reflection of an increasing "upgrade or die" attitude in the multimedia industry. From games optimized for 16MB of memory to CD Plus titles that makers freely admit won't run on many of the CD-ROM drives in customers' machines, we're getting a clear message: Shell out for an expensive new computer or be left behind.

Still, the TV and telephone became cheap commodity devices, and I can imagine Intercast driving PCs farther along that path. Just think: You've subscribed to the whole NBA season through your DirectTV satellite dish, it's April, and three games have playoff implications. So, from the comfort of your couch, wireless keyboard in lap, you punch up three browser windows on your wall-sized flat-panel display across the living room. Each has the TV pictures, chat windows, Java applets updating the other games and individual stats as soon as they happen, and maybe a running spreadsheet-type assessment of the playoff situation.

Sound farfetched? So did telephones, flight, TV, and the moon itself, once. I, for one, am not betting against it.

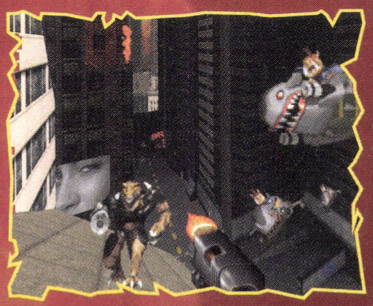
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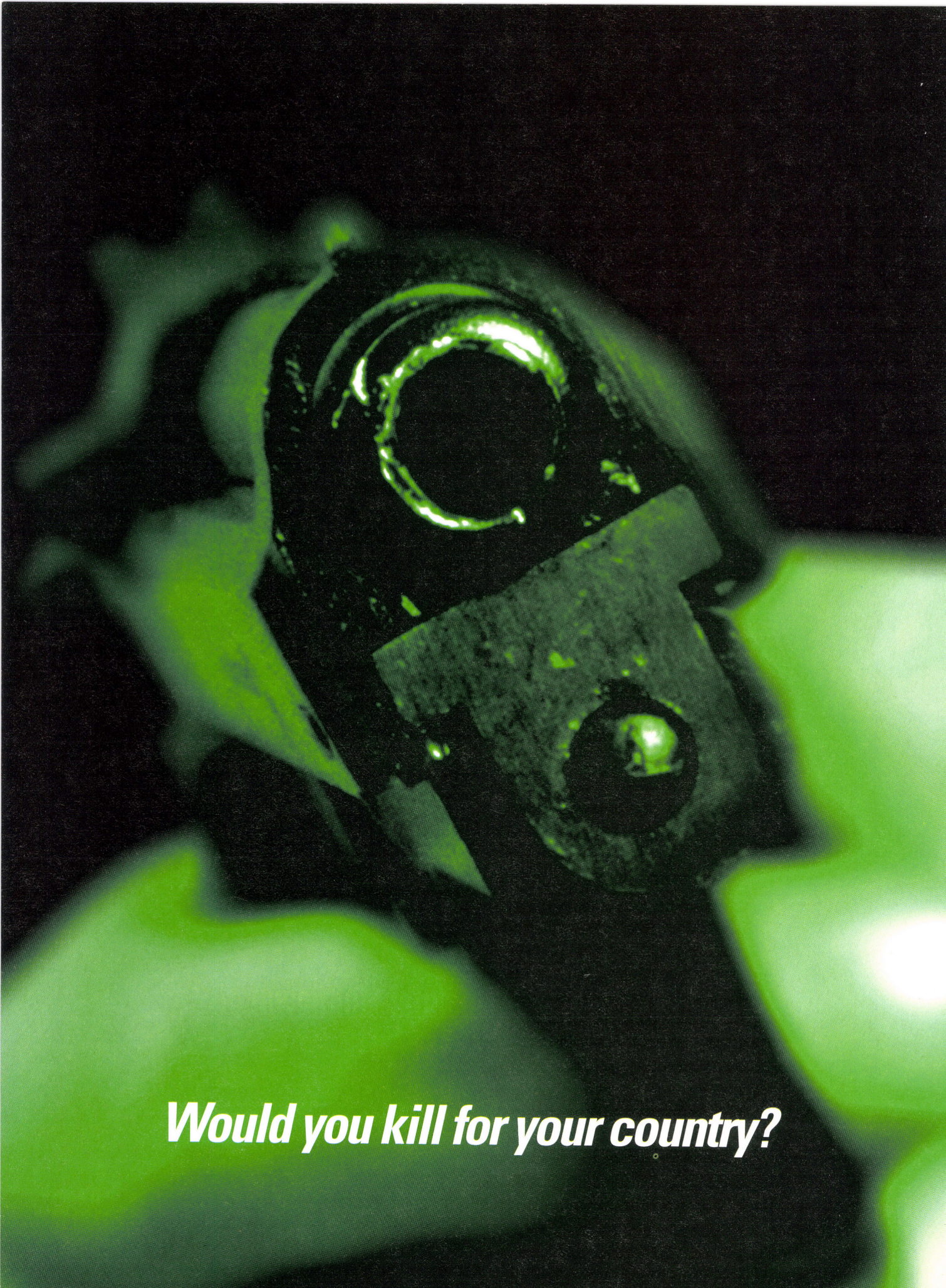
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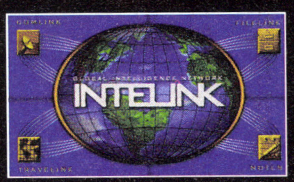
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WILLIAM COLBY
CIA
FORMER DIRECTOR

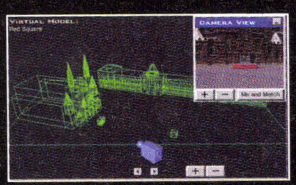
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BY JOHN P. WITHERS

BASIC TRAINING FOR PC GENERALS

ATTENTION:

NEW RECRUITS: WE'LL LEAD YOU TO SIX TOP WARGAMES THAT WILL START YOU OFF ON A FIVE-STAR CAREER.

War is hell—and selecting the right wargame can be nearly as tough.

Before new recruits jump into the fray, though, a quick briefing is in order. Wargames cast you in the role of a general, commanding multiple units on the battlefield in an effort to outwit the enemy. Most are historical, although some deal with futuristic conflicts. Either way, these games essentially deal with combat from a third-person perspective.

Beyond their subject matter—ground combat or naval combat—wargames also have a few other things in common. First, they take a long time to play. While a single scenario may take a half hour in some cases, expect any decent wargame to provide a good 150 hours of play.

Second, each wargame has a basic level of control. This corresponds to the number of units that are represented by each icon and determines how much micro-management the game entails. Some games, such as Command & Conquer, let you control individual units, such as a single man or tank. Others allow control of a large number of units—up to entire battalions—with a single icon. In general, the lower the level of control, the more furious the pace of a game; it may take longer to move units around, but they constantly fight individual skirmishes as they advance or retreat.

Finally, each wargame has a level of realism, which can vary wildly. On the low end are games, again like Command & Conquer, designed primarily to appeal to a broad audience. These games tend to feature fast play action (although a full game can still take a considerable period of time) at the expense of combat realism. On the high-end, turn-based monsters, like D-Day: America Invades, include hex-based maps and chits (symbols that represent units) that are as accurate as the human mind can make them. Playing these complicated games with effectiveness requires a complete understanding of every element and rule nuance, so they generally appeal only to hard-core military enthusiasts.

With all this in mind, how can you tell which wargame is right for your level of experience? Never fear: Like a good intelligence service, *PC Entertainment* uncovers the secrets of six popular ground-based games that cover the full spectrum (from easiest to hardest) of the wargaming experience: Command & Conquer, Panzer General, Steel Panthers, The Civil War, Battleground: Ardennes, and D-Day: America Invades. We've even included a few tips to start you off on the right foot.

COMMAND & CONQUER

Command & Conquer (C&C) lies at the absolute low end of the realism spectrum, but there's no denying that this is a game that's wickedly fun.

In C&C, you fight either side of the futuristic battle between the forces of the Global Defense Initiative (GDI) and the terrorists of the evil Brotherhood of Nod. To conduct the battle, a small range of troop types have to build and defend bases, while at the same time refining Tiberium ore to keep up unit production. Most of the



Heavy action and ease of use make Command & Conquer good for beginners.

scenarios are fairly straightforward destroy-all-opposition tasks, but there's enough variety thrown in to keep things interesting.

C&C makes no pretense at realism. There are no hex-based maps to master, and the damage system is simplistic. You easily control various individual units with point-and-click mouse commands that take about three minutes to master, making it a good choice for wargame newbies.

C&C is also the only game in this roundup that doesn't use turns, which are a hallmark of most wargames. Each turn typically allows first one side, then the other, to move and fire. This gives you plenty of time to contemplate strategy without worrying about being attacked. In real wars, of course, you don't usually have that luxury. In this respect, C&C is actually more realistic than most wargames.

However, just because it's relatively simple, don't think C&C is quick or easy. The game boasts more than 20 missions, and some of them are devilishly difficult to beat. An individual mission can take anywhere from 30 minutes to five hours or more. (For review, see *Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 142.)

STEEL PANTHERS

Steel Panthers is the next step up in realism from C&C—and that first step is a doozy. But while Steel Panthers boasts a lot more detail, its low level of orientation focuses on controlling squads of four to ten units, instead of the individual units in C&C.

Steel Panthers covers the hallowed ground



Steel Panthers is a much more serious wargame, but it's still easy to play.

of the wargame: World War II. There are probably more WWII wargames than those dealing with all other conflicts combined, and Steel Panthers is easily among the best.

The game lets you assume the side of just about every country that took part in the conflict, including Poland, Italy, and the Soviet Union. Of course, the big draws are Germany and the good ol' USA.

The basic formula of Steel Panthers is simple: Before each battle, you select a set number of units from the types available and place them on a hex-based map. You then move them to take over predetermined goals before a set number of turns runs out. Complete your goals every time and you progress through the war, ultimately winning WWII for your side.

Steel Panthers also ups the wargame ante by introducing a critical concept—morale. Units that take a pounding tend to get in a bad mood. If this goes on long enough, they'll flee or even surrender.

While Steel Panthers is a first-rate game, it does suffer from a few flaws. First, the order in which mission details are described and units are placed is backward, forcing you to place your units before you know the full details of

Command & Conquer
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

Control Level: Individual Unit

EASY

TIPS

- **Grenade Units for the GDI or Rocket Launchers for Nod are unnaturally powerful in large groups. They are also quick to make, so stock up on them.**
- **An APC (armored personnel carrier) full of engineers is probably the most powerful weapon in the game. Put this in the center of a large formation and run it into the middle of the enemy camp. All of the buildings taken by the engineers will be destroyed by the other side for you. Get the construction unit, the barracks, and the refinery, and you've won.**

Steel Panthers
Strategic Simulations
800-601-7529

Control Level: Squad

MEDIUM

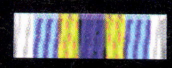
TIPS

- **Artillery is overrated. Don't waste core units on artillery pieces. Tanks are the king of this battle.**
- **Your core is going to have to stay with you for a long time. Spend the money at the onset to get veteran units with their own transport.**
- **Use smoke screens to cover advancing troops whenever possible.**

Panzer General
Strategic Simulations
800-601-7529

Control Level: Platoon

MEDIUM





TIPS

- **The pioneer is the unit to beat. Able to ignore entrenchment levels, this humble unit can be the key to a quick victory.**
- **Over-strength your more experienced units whenever possible. A veteran unit at maximum over-strength is a formidable weapon.**
- **Protect your artillery as much as possible. Keep them in half-tracks and use them in the following order: dismount, shoot, remount, move.**

The Civil War
Empire Interactive
800-216-9706

Control Level: Variable

VARIABLE





TIPS

- **Rally your troops using the "Re-attach all units" command to improve the odds of reversing a desperate situation.**
- **Cavalry units aren't much help in pitched battles. Hold them back from the thick of things and reserve them for scouting work.**
- **Gang up on enemy forces as much as possible, while detaching a few units from your main forces to secure neutral and unoccupied cities.**
- **Artillery crossfires are exceedingly effective.**



Panzer General merges realism with simple game play.

the scenario. The game also tends to get confused about the names of units, giving more than one group the same designations; that frequently can make placing them difficult.

Fortunately, Steel Panthers' extra features, such as its built-in scenario editor, which lets you create your own battles from scratch, and an online weapons encyclopedia, make up for these shortcomings. (For review, see *Electronic Entertainment*, December 1995, page 144.)

PANZER GENERAL

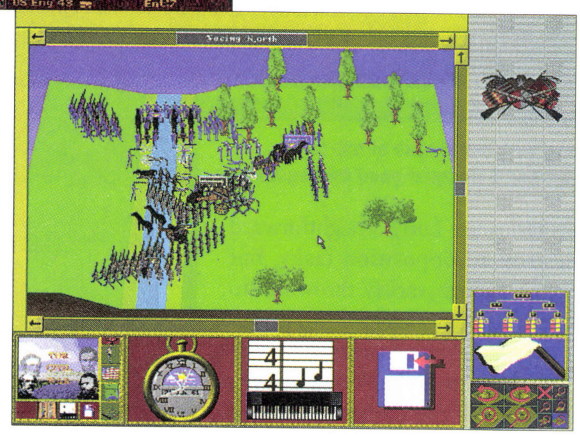
Panzer General (PG) is one of the great wargames of all time. Brilliantly executed, PG is both realistic and fairly easy to play, making it a fine addition to your game collection.

PG covers the same basic ground as Steel Panthers, but this time you control platoons. While you can fight individual battles as the Allies, you can fight only as the Germans in a campaign game. (SSI was due to release Allied General around Christmas, which lets players command campaigns of the Allied forces in Europe.) While the basics resemble Steel Panthers, the combat detail is a notch higher. For example, PG takes into account how much a given unit has dug in. A severely outnumbered unit with a high entrenchment level can be a very difficult opponent.

Both PG and Steel Panthers, however, suffer from a failing because of their common ancestry as Strategic Simulations games—horrid documentation. Their game manuals are hard to decipher and lack complete information about what units have what abilities and how to react in certain situations. If you want more, turn to the Internet or help books. (For review, see *Electronic Entertainment*, February 1995, page 88.)

THE CIVIL WAR

Falling solidly in the middle of the complexity spectrum, The Civil War covers everything from company to army command. This variability lets you tailor the game into a close tactical conflict or a strategic-planning game. Multiple levels of difficulty let you control as little or as much of the war effort as you want.



Despite its flaws, The Civil War's flexibility makes it a good choice for newcomers.

The Civil War casts you as Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson Davis, determining the fate of the nation during one of the bloodiest chapters in our history. You not only control the military forces, but must also pay attention to the supplies and recruitment production of your cities.

Although The Civil War gives you lots of flexibility, it falls short in battle execution, which is the heart of any good wargame. It is ridiculously easy to take out superior forces by using basic tactics, for example.

The game also has a few notable bugs. Unit numbers are reported incorrectly, and in many battles, you can kill more of the enemy than actually exist. For example, it is rather alarming to attack a 500-man unit and find at the end of the battle that you've killed 6,000 men.

The Civil War deserves kudos, however, for its interesting combination of real-time and turn-based action. The game functions in day and night phases, with a clock ticking the whole time. During the day, you fight battles and resolve orders, then place orders at night. This gives you time to plan out your next move, but you must be quick about executing it. (For review, see *Electronic Entertainment*, October 1995, page 94.)

BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES

For even more realism, there's Battleground: Ardennes (BA), which covers the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last-gasp attempt to cleave the Allied forces in two. The game faithfully depicts more than 20 different scenarios of varying complexities during the conflict, and you can choose to fight as either the Axis or the Allies.

Make no bones about it: BA is a serious, realistic wargame, and it may pose a tremendous challenge to newcomers. For starters, choice of units falls by the wayside; you get only those units that actually participated in the real battles. The game automatically places units in their historical positions, and you must keep a constant eye on incoming reinforcements so you can quickly usher them up to the front lines.



If you really want all the realities of war, D-Day: America Invades delivers the goods.

BA's strict phases break down the progression of the game into a number of distinct operations. During one period, troops can fire; during another, they can assault; and in yet another, they can actually move. One last distinction: BA is the only Windows game in this roundup.

D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES

If you want the most realistic wargame out there, consider D-Day. This game pulls out all the stops to accurately simulate the Allied invasion and breakout at Normandy. Putting you in command of either the Axis or Allied forces, D-Day is quite complex: Disorganization levels simulate the constant confusion that units faced on the beaches, lines of command and supply from headquarters are a real factor, and even the effects of various leaders' abilities and personalities are figured into the combat model.

Battleground: Ardennes turns up the realism with historically accurate units.

D-Day is a game by hard-core wargamers for hard-core wargamers. There are no fancy graphics here, just a hex-based map with a lot of chits representing units. But if you really want to simulate the realities of war, D-Day is the ticket. You'll feel like a real general as you try to coordinate battles and lines of supply while fighting disorganization and fatigue.

John P. Withers is a computer entertainment writer and consultant living in Huntington, West Virginia.

Battleground: Ardennes
Empire Interactive
800-216-9706

Control Level: Platoon

HARD

TIPS

- **Use artillery to soften up a heavy armor unit, then close in and assault it with a mix of infantry and armor. In an assault, there are no terrain bonuses for the defending unit, and the disrupted defender is only half as effective.**
- **Lay plenty of smoke with artillery. Fire coming out of a smoked hex is only half as effective.**
- **Note that infantry has a separate range for its anti-armor fire of one hex. Don't let your armor get beside an enemy infantry unit, or it can bring this fire to bear with devastating results.**

D-Day: America Invades
Avalon Hill
800-999-3222

Control Level: Company

HARD

TIPS

- **Fatigue is probably the biggest killer in this game. Make sure your units get plenty of rest.**
- **Supply lines are your friend. A unit with a dead supply line is soon a dead unit. At the end of a hard day of fighting, always make sure that your units can trace a supply line in the morning.**



The Stars Come Out

By Donald St. John



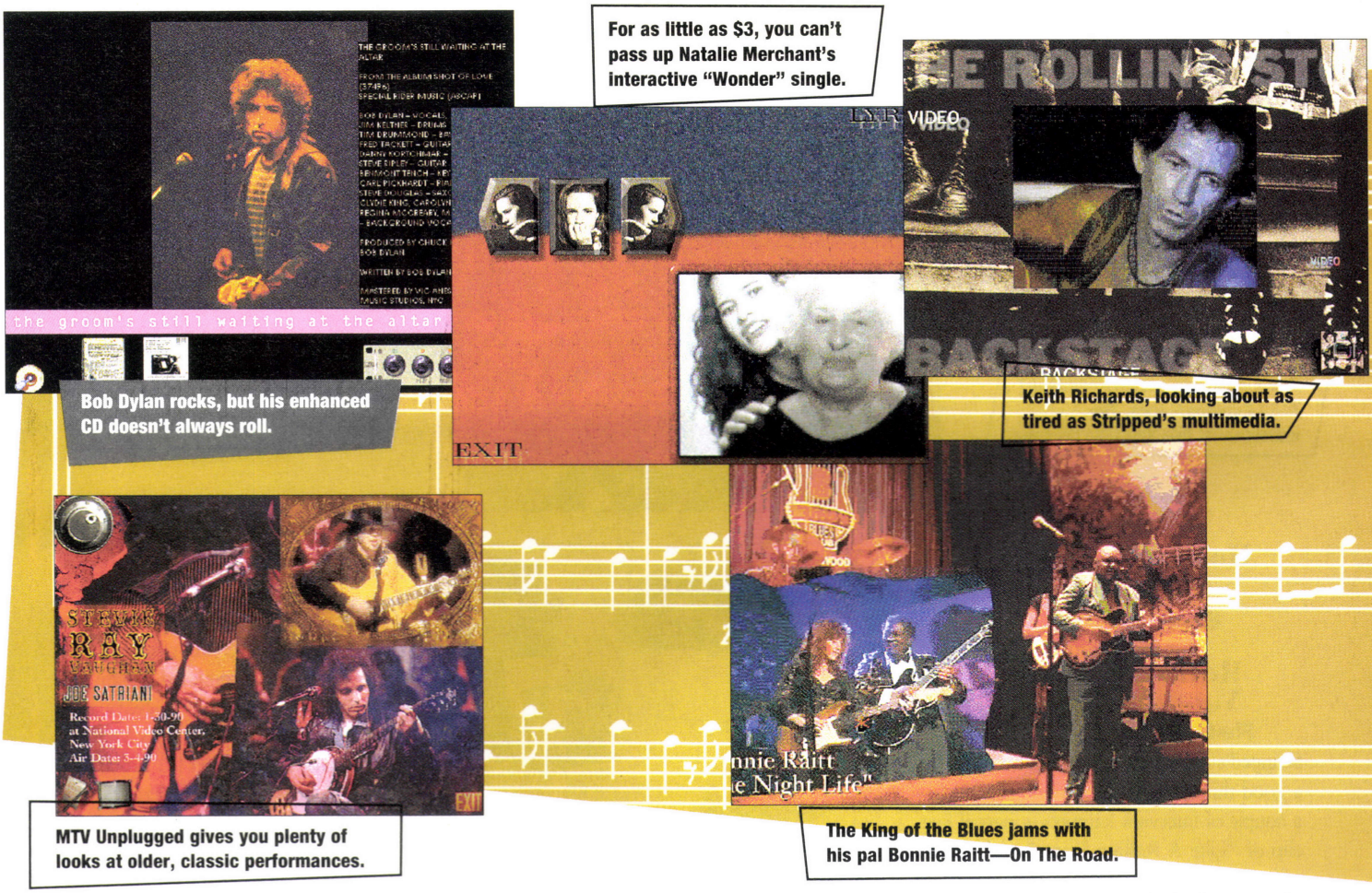
Finally, the big names release their multimedia music discs. But are they chart-toppers?

It's about time the record industry got around to it. After months of planning, posturing, and producing, it's actually landed a bunch of enhanced music CDs on store shelves, along with a small but potent second generation of full-bore CD-ROM music releases.

For the most part, the wait was worth it. The best of the new titles boast ingenious and coherent artistic concepts, well-executed designs, and a level of integration between music and other media—video, text, and animation—that reveals the potential for smart fusions of sound and vision.

Just as important, instead of idealistic experiments from marginal bands, some of the latest discs herald full multimedia participation from major artists.

Here's what you'll find at your local record store:



For as little as $3, you can't pass up Natalie Merchant's interactive "Wonder" single.

Bob Dylan rocks, but his enhanced CD doesn't always roll.

Keith Richards, looking about as tired as Stripped's multimedia.

MTV Unplugged gives you plenty of looks at older, classic performances.

The King of the Blues jams with his pal Bonnie Raitt—On The Road.

Alice in Chains: Jar of Flies

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Sony's first attempt at an enhanced CD is a good one. The fly motif pervades the design to good effect (especially the controller buttons for videos) and leads you to quite a bit of content—two videos, video and audio interviews, a complete discography with samples of all Alice's songs, and a smart link between the audio and lyrics. (Sony Music; 212-833-6564; Enhanced CD; $16.98)

Bob Dylan: Greatest Hits Vol. 3

Rating: ★ ★ 1/2

Sony expanded the original album to two discs to fit the enhanced CD's multimedia additions (and didn't boost the price), but don't expect comprehensive Dylan info from the sparse timeline; it tracks only the period covered by the album (1975 and later) and glosses over major career and life moves. The two videos (the famous "Tangled Up In Blue" clip from the Rolling Thunder Revue, and "Series of Dreams" from *The Bootleg Years, Vol. 1* box set) play well and the credits are interesting. But the minimal design doesn't hold your attention, and the lack of any participation from Dylan himself is a glaring problem. (Sony Music; 212-833-6564; Enhanced CD; $22.98)

We rated the multimedia, not the music. We looked for good design, smooth transitions between elements, full song clips—and a coherent overall concept.

B.B. King: On The Road

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

B.B. King built his career on his personality as well as his music, and the bluesman's warmth—and blue-screen video appearances—make On The Road something special. Take the wheel of his old tour bus and visit five virtual environments to learn about B.B.'s life and music. Lucille's monument in cyberspace is terrific, for example, with B.B.'s comments on his mentors and contemporaries. Other sites, such as the Blues Club, have less to offer, and it can be difficult to make it back to the bus. The disc holds plenty of rare performances, but no full songs. (For an interview with B.B. King, see Star Talk, page 16.) (MCA Records; 800-431-9015; CD-ROM for Win/Mac; $39.95)

Natalie Merchant: "Wonder"

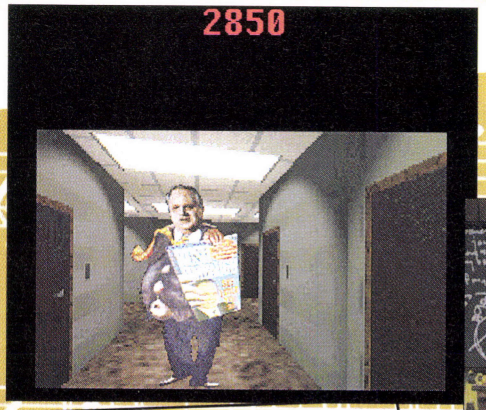
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

This bare-bones release from the former 10,000 Maniacs singer holds the latest single off her *Tigerlily* album, one unreleased audio B-side, and the video for "Wonder" in a sparse but well-designed interface. No interactivity and slim cardboard packaging would normally drop the score, but a can't-miss bargain price makes this the perfect disc to dip your toe into the multimedia music water. (Elektra Records; 212-275-4000; Enhanced CD; $3-$5)

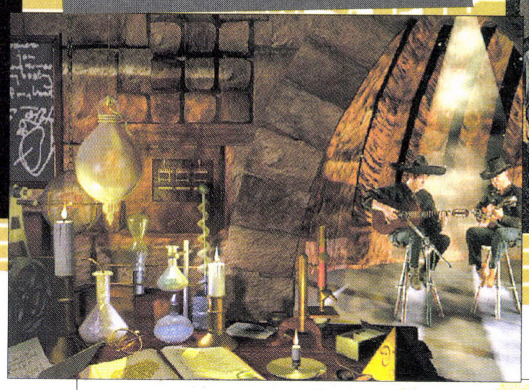
MTV Unplugged

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

The star of MTV Unplugged is...the show itself, and Alex Coletti, its laconic producer. Coletti lends insight to every Unplugged episode (listed in a handy index by name or air date) with insightful comments that often complement short video clips from the shows themselves. Extras include artist commentary, behind-the-scenes looks, and three complete unaired song videos from Lenny Kravitz ("Flowers For Zoe"), 10,000 Maniacs ("I'm Not The Man"), and Paul McCartney ("Things We Said Today"). You'll have to fight an unintuitive interface to get to anything, though, and the innovative full-screen video by developer REV Entertainment looks great only if you've got a Pentium or Power Mac. (Viacom New Media; 212-258-6000; CD-ROM for Win/Mac; $24.95)



Think Rush is a useless windbag? Todd Rundgren does. The Individualist lets you take revenge.



Sting puts love under the microscope in one of All This Time's superb areas.



The Voodoo Lounge is really where you'd rather hang out with the Stones.



Toad the Wet Sprocket's yearly Christmas cards are just some of Dulcinea's appeal.

Rolling Stones: Stripped

Rating: ★ ★

Rolling Stones: Voodoo Lounge

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Stripped's multimedia comes as a bonus—a good thing, because you don't get much: a couple of interview snippets, a partial live clip of "Like A Rolling Stone," and tossed-off partial backstage video jams of "Shattered" and "Tumbling Dice." Lyrics come with four different background designs, but you can't jump from one song to the next—an inexcusable failure. (Virgin Records, 310-278-1181; Enhanced CD; $17.99)

Fortunately, Voodoo Lounge is much better. You enter a swampy New Orleans mansion and get to hit the dance floor, go to the mixing board for some song remixes, or view Voodoo Lounge videos. However—as with any rock event—you need an easily-found pass to enter the VIP lounge where the Stones hang out. Once there, you can hear some acoustic jams between Keith Richards and Ron Wood, or listen to Keith talk with obvious affection about 20 of his blues and country heroes. Voodoo Lounge isn't perfect: The navigation drags you along, almost none of the "riff-raff" on the dance floor actually do anything, and the blues gallery is inexplicably missing Chuck Berry—try imagining the Stones without him. (Virgin Records/GTE Interactive; 800-483-8632; CD-ROM for Win/Mac, $49.95)

TR-i (Todd Rundgren): The Individualist

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

This is the first enhanced CD to really explore the possibilities of the medium. Rundgren is way more advanced at multimedia than any of his peers, and it shows. Lyrics actually matter here—click on a song line, and you go there. You can "mix" a live video of "Fascist Christ" from *No World Order* from three perspectives. And each song has either superb animation or an interactive element: Don't miss the Doom-style game for "Cast The First Stone," a bit of warped genius in which you get to blast away at Rush Limbaugh, among others. The design is intelligent and the whole thing plays as smooth as glass—songs fade, pictures blur out, and a loading indicator tells you how long it'll take to reach the next element. (Digital Entertainment; 800-728-4000; Enhanced CD; $16.98)

Soundgarden: Alive In The Superunknown

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

This enhanced CD shows a fresh approach to merging music and multimedia. Generous video content sends the Seattle hard-rockers slamming through a good half-dozen songs, plus a pair from their pal Artis the Spoonman (an amazing spoons player). They dress up the usual photo gallery with ever-changing instrumental jams. Best is the Superunknown, where you'll find some of the video clips and a version of the game Breakout. It all resides in a funky, well-animated design; the video pause/resume feature is especially useful. (A&M Records; 213-469-2411; Enhanced CD; under $20)

Sting: All This Time

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The lack of a jewel box is just about the *only* thing wrong with this superb, comprehensive look at Sting. The first truly wonderful multimedia music release, it should set the standard for the whole field. A lush, incredibly detailed interface takes you around a 360-degree path leading to five coastside buildings, each representing a period of Sting's solo career. Along the way, you'll find tons of performance clips, videos, interviews, TV and movie appearances, and more. Spend some time with All This Time and you'll completely understand what makes the man tick. (Starwave; 800-452-8646; CD-ROM for Windows 95; $48.95)

Toad the Wet Sprocket: Dulcinea

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Sony's best multimedia offering, this disc captures a real sense of what the Santa Barbara–based alterna-rockers are all about. Generous interview and text clips supplement the "Something's Always Wrong" video. Enjoy excellent production values, funky animation and unusually detailed liner-note material—especially the list of B-sides and rare tracks, an important facet of Toad's career. (Sony Music; 213-833-6564; Enhanced CD; $22.98) ■

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PC CD-ROM

KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+

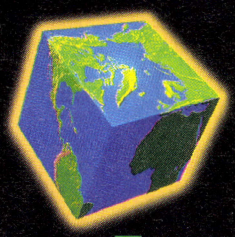
3DO

SEGA SATURN

PlayStation

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– Entertainment Weekly, Hottest Stuff in Cyberspace, Oct. 13 '95

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– Wired, Nov. '95

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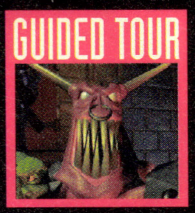
Dungeon Keeper

Who wants to be a hero? Bullfrog's latest action/strategy game lets you be bad to the bone as the Master of an army of menacing monsters.

By Steve Klett



Your goal: Convert this entire land to evil.



The valiant knight cautiously leads a grizzled wizard down the dark, dank passageway; goodness radiates from the knight's armor like a giant halo. Turning a corner, the pair spot a pot of gold seemingly unprotected in a small, dark chamber.

As they rush to stuff the gleaming coins in their pockets, a Horned Reaper steps out of the shadows and lops off both of their heads with a mighty swing of its deadly scythe. An evil cackle emanates from deep inside the dungeon. The Horned Reaper relaxes just a little, for the Dungeon Master is pleased with him—if only for a moment.

This is but one of hundreds of scenarios that can take place in Dungeon Keeper, Bullfrog's new action/strategy game that's due to hit store shelves this month. Instead of some boring good guy, you play the role of a malevolent Dungeon Master charged with killing any adventurers who dare to enter your domain. Butcher enough of these "heroes" and you'll reign supreme over the kingdom. (For a preview of Dungeon Keeper, see January 1995, page 62.)

Dungeon Keeper meshes strategy and action by allowing you to order various creatures to do your bidding in the game's third-person overhead view, then letting you do the fighting yourself by



jumping into their bodies for some first-person, Doom-style carnage. And you've plenty of classic dungeon-dwelling creatures to choose from: Trolls, Dragons, Skeletons, Demon Spawn, Bile Demons, and Scum Tentacles, to name a few. Each creature has its own distinct strengths and weaknesses, making it suited for specific tasks.

As the Dungeon Master, you also possess a frightening assortment of spells. Magic Carpet fans will recognize the classic fireball, magma, and lightning incantations, but Dungeon Keeper doesn't stop there. Cast the Skin of Armour spell, for example, to make your charges less susceptible to attack, or conjure up the Reflect spell to send heroes' spells right back at 'em. You make the call. Of course, if you want to be more devious, how 'bout setting a Freeze trap, which renders heroes immobile so you can do what you will with them? If you're in a hurry, try a Gas Cloud trap, which simply kills on contact.

The extensive selection of evil options makes Dungeon Keeper's game-play possibilities virtually endless. Not to worry, though, our Guided Tour will help get you started on the proper Dungeon Master career track. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS/Win CD; list price $59.95)



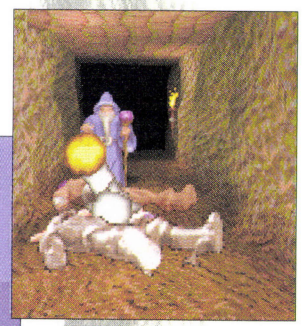
Evil Sorcerers are useless in hand-to-hand combat and cowardly—watch 'em run at the first sign of trouble. Keep them in line, however, and their magic becomes quite powerful as the game progresses.



Not even a mother could love these ugly mugs. Top row, left to right: Horned Reaper, Skeleton, Troll, Dragon, Demon Spawn. Middle row: Fly, Vengeful Siren, Sorcerer, Bile Demon, Imp. Last row: Cockroach, Vampire, Spider, Scum Tentacle.



Those heroic Wizards are dangerous. Be sure to stay out of the way of the lightning spell, shown here. Keep that Reflect Spell handy.



This Wizard is the last survivor from a party of trespassing adventurers. As you can see by that fireball, he's not ready to give up. Controlling your creatures in the first-person part of the game can be the key to defeating the most powerful heroes.



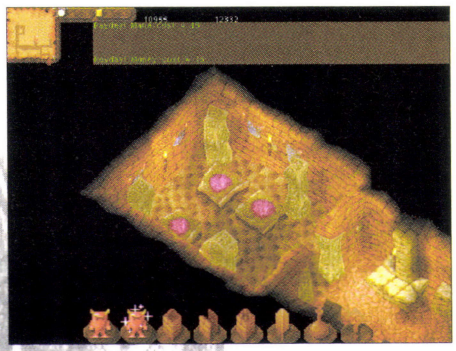
Trolls ain't too bright, they're poorly armed, have little aptitude for magic, are insubordinate and hard-drinking, and cheat at cards. But they work cheap and excel at hand-to-hand combat.



Cockroaches are very fast and well-armored, but worthless in combat. Use them for spying.

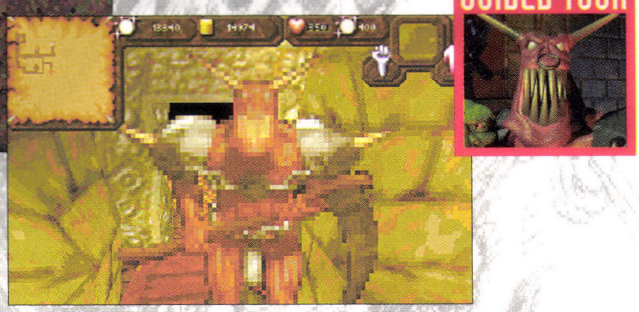


A party of heroes rush to the attack, led by a stout Dwarf. A fearless fighter, the Dwarf is often the first into the fray. Behind him comes a Knight—a dangerous fighter and master of all weapons. Next comes a Warrior Monk, feared for his berserk rages. A Wizard hangs back, waiting to pick off your strongest monsters with his magic.



Here's where you can summon new recruits—if you've got the cash.

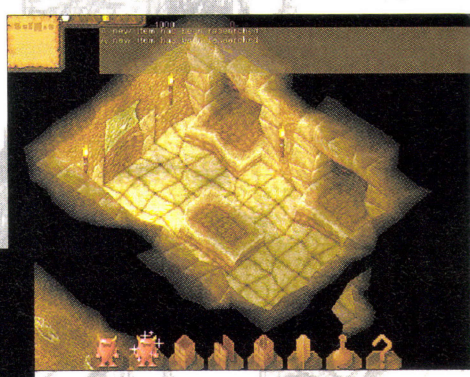
GUIDED TOUR



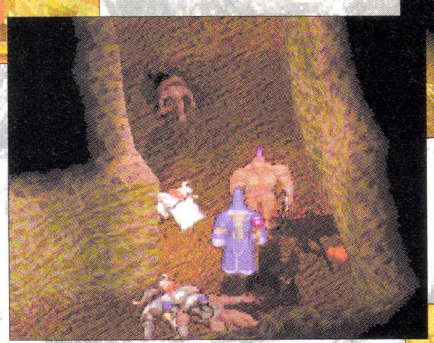
The Horned Reaper should form the backbone of your evil army. His wicked scythe and ability to cast a decent range of spells makes him a well-rounded fighter—and one of Dungeon Keeper's most powerful monsters.



The loathsome Bile Demon is very slow, as you'd expect with a potbelly like that, but he's extremely well-armored and a powerful magician. He also loves to dish out punishment with his thick skull and those spiked balls on the ends of his horns.



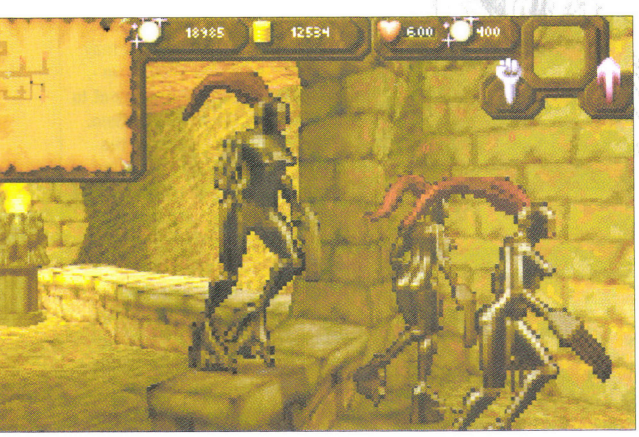
A well-fed army is a happy army. You'll need to build a kitchen so you can turn all those hero corpses into supper for your monsters.



A Wizard and Warrior Monk step cautiously over the bodies of slain heroes. Notice the Imp following them. Kill off the pair and he'll collect their gold and mana (magic power) for you.



The entrance is for your creatures to use and heroes to find. It's also a great place to set up an ambush.



Vengeful Sirens are quick and catlike. Poorly armored, however, they're best used in groups. The big question: Can you trust them? Keep an eye on them.

DOS CD • Mac CD

Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire

By Steve Klett

After helping to destroy the Death Star as Rookie One in the original Rebel Assault, you still could not let yourself fully enjoy the jubilation back at the Rebel base. Only you truly understood one terrifying fact: It's not wise to tick off Darth Vader.



These stormtroopers should be easy prey for Rookie One.

Yes, the infamous *Star Wars* villain is back, and he's brought yet another top-secret weapon of destruction with him in Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire—the sequel we've all been waiting for. Once again, it's up to you as Rookie One to thwart Vader's diabolical plans.

As we pointed out in our preview (*Electronic Entertainment*, October 1995, page 102), The Hidden Empire consists of 15 levels, or "chapters," in which you fight Vader's stooges in a bevy of different *Star Wars* vehicles, including X-Wings, B-Wings, and Han Solo's Millenium Falcon (very cool, even though its existence at an Imperial base is never explained). Of course, you'll also duke it out in Old West-style blaster fights with stormtroopers on several occasions.

This time, though, you have more assistance than just The Force. The tough-as-nails Ru Murleen—one of your trainers in the prequel—joins you in the game's later stages.

Structurally, The Hidden Empire is almost identical to the original Rebel Assault. The mixture of flying and ground-based missions, is nearly the same, as are the basic game-play mechanics. In flying sequences, you follow a scripted path while blasting everything in sight, occasionally directing your ship when arrows on the screen tell you to. In the ground-based missions, you pop out of cover to blast hordes of stormtroopers.

Graphically, however, The Hidden Empire is a major step up. You now have 256 colors assaulting your eyes instead of 16, which means the game play looks nearly as good as the high-res cinematics. Plus, all the characters are real-life actors, albeit not necessarily talented ones.



Ru Murleen is back, this time with a human face under the helmet.

The end result is a game that looks almost as good as the movie that started it all. The game's sound effects are terrific, too. Laser fire, engine noises, and radio chatter sound exactly like they did in the original movie. Unfortunately, the game falls down when reproducing the classic *Star Wars* theme: It sounds horribly compressed and scratchy.

The Hidden Empire makes some major strides in game play, too, but it's still far from perfect. For instance, trying to complete the ground-based missions with a joystick is an exercise in futility even on the easiest settings. Using a mouse is much more efficient. However, the inverse is true for the flying sequences, in which you have to jump out to the configuration screen and switch control methods between missions. It's tedious, but at least you have the option to make the change.



Oh no, not another asteroid field!

The Hidden Empire is also every bit as tough as Rebel Assault. Even skilled players may find beating the simpler missions a severe challenge on the standard difficulty level (the second of four settings). Thankfully, LucasArts included a difficulty editor that lets you adjust the game's parameters to fit your skill level.

One more quibble: Some of the missions will trigger a case of deja vu for the million or so folks who played the first Rebel Assault. Regardless, you may have more fun this time around because of The Hidden Empire's improved graphics and new configuration options. So what are you waiting for, Rookie One? Get out there and kick some Imperial butt! Oh yeah, and may The Force be with you.

Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire



LucasArts Entertainment
800-985-8227

Platform: DOS CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486/50, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $44.95-$54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

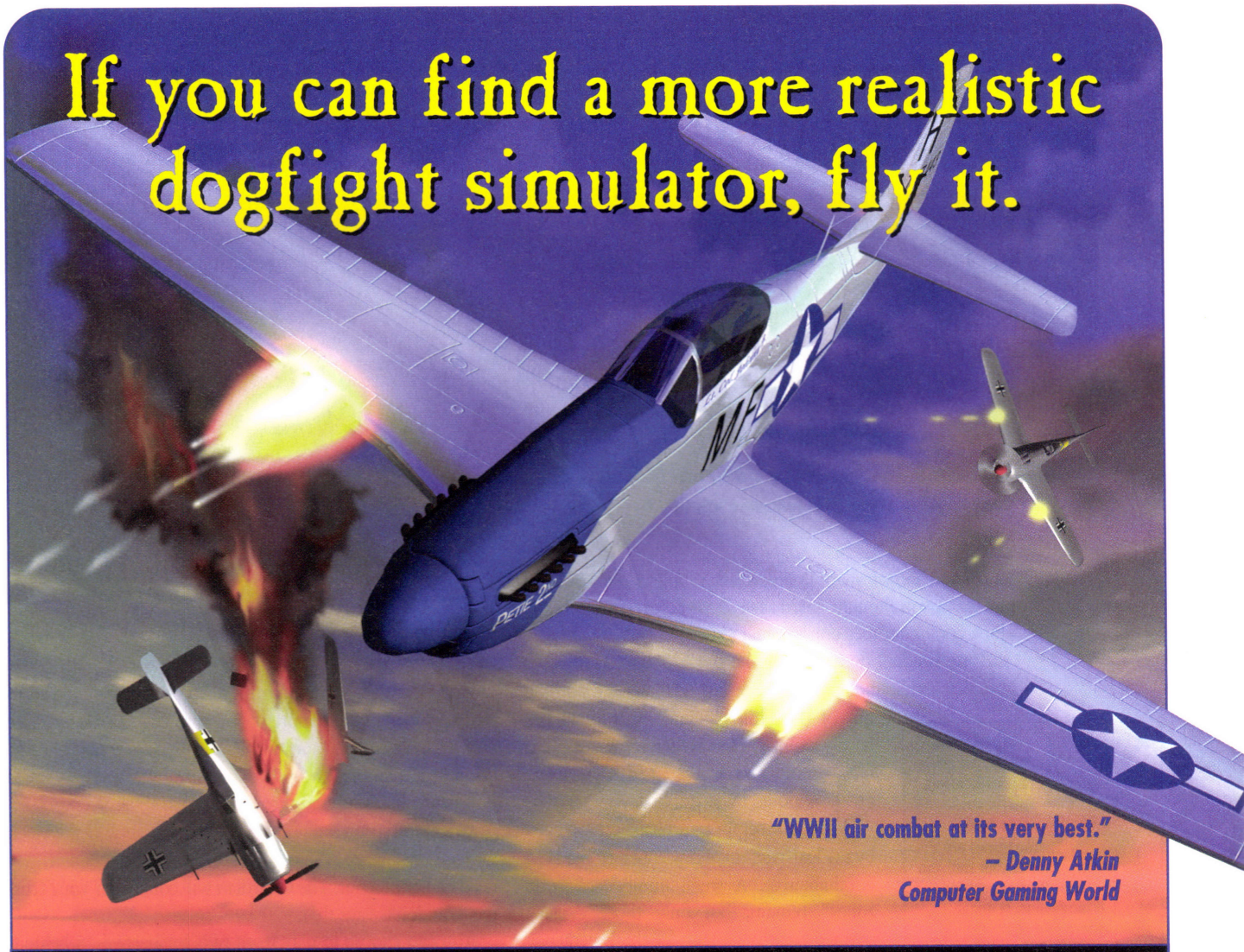
Improved game play and superior graphics make Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire even more fun than the original.

TIPS



• **Before you go into the difficulty editor and start making things too easy on yourself, just try the Rapid Fire laser setting in the configuration screen. It may be all the help you need.** • **In the shoot-out missions, try not to hit the same target all the time. Killing everyone equally is the key to a quick victory. Also, try using the mouse to target a difficult stormtrooper and then the right button to duck without adjusting your aim.** • **Aren't those cloaked Imperial Interceptors a pain to hit? After they disappear, return the targeting receptacle to the middle of the screen and you may be surprised.** • **Hmmm, what happens if you blast those lights under the bridge in Chapter 13?**

If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.



"WWII air combat at its very best."
– Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World

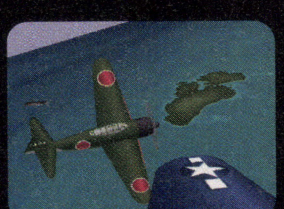
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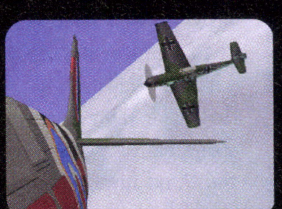




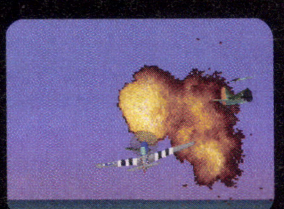
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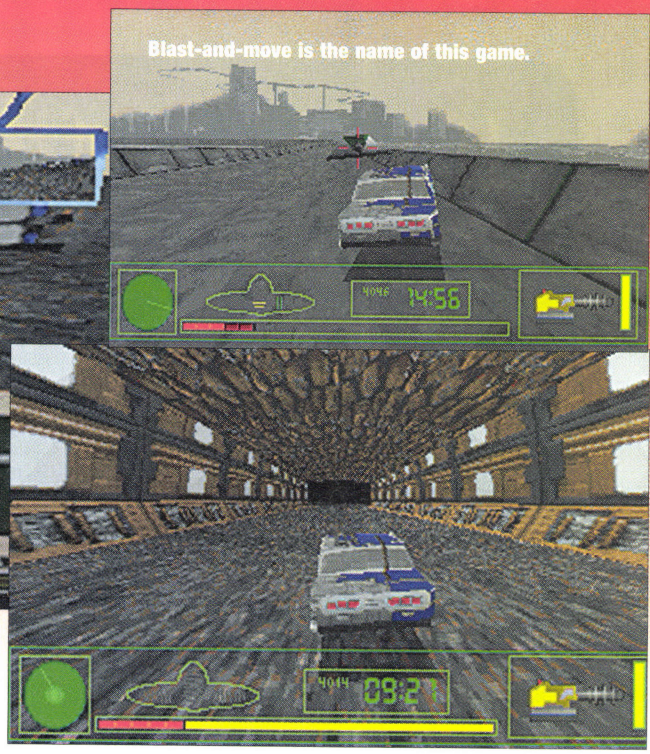
ACTION

Zone Raiders

By Steve Klett



Don't forget to check your rear-view mirror.



The chase-car view can be fun in tunnels.

Doom clones are multiplying like rabbits these days, and just when you thought you'd seen all you'd ever want to see, along comes another one to catch your eye.

Zone Raiders doesn't look like much at first glance. Its graphics and sounds are adequate but certainly are nothing out of the ordinary, and its story line is hardly unique. However, after a few minutes behind the wheel of this futuristic arcade shooter, I was hooked.

Here's the setup: Earth has been ravaged by nuclear war, rendering much of the land uninhabitable. A small number of "safe zones" remain, but only those citizens deemed healthy enough by the Emergency Containment Organization (ECO) are allowed to live in them. Undesirables such as yourself are labeled Raiders and cast into the wastelands to perish. To survive, you must enter the forbidden zones to gather the resources needed to repair an old jet that can transport you to a safe haven of your own—the fabled FreeZone.

As a Zone Raider, you have the use of four souped-up classic automobiles fitted with hoverplates that make wheels and tires a quaint anachronism. You skim over the road surface at high speeds like Luke Skywalker in his landspeeder. To make things interesting, ECO Zone Patrols oppose you at every twist and turn within the network of roads surrounding the safe zones.

To win, you must find your way through the 16 maze-like highway systems that comprise the game's three episodes. You start out with only a basic laser gun, which has unlimited ammo but little impact. To get far, you'll need to find weapons that are more destructive, such as the machine gun, grenade launcher, or mortar. The usual selection of rockets, missiles, ammo, and power-ups such as speed and shield boosts are also scattered throughout each level.

Oh, yeah: Your time on each level is limited. If the clock on your dash reaches zero before you've found the items you need and gotten out, The Guardian will come after you. Trust me, you don't want that.

You can choose to play from two perspectives, a behind-the-wheel view or chase-car view. A modicum of instruments on your very simple dashboard tells you about car damage and the status of your weapons. A radar scope points you in the direction of your target and beeps as you get closer. Social gamers with access to a network can wreak havoc with as many as seven friends, or you can go head-to-head via modem or null-modem cable.

Zone Raider graphics—which resemble a blend of Doom and Terminal Velocity—suffice for creating a feeling of raw speed, but are nothing to write home about, even at the highest detail settings. Musically, the game takes a step back in time. The sound effects are as ho-hum as the graphics.

So why do I like this game? Simple. Superb play mechanics and simple controls make it fun. You merely push forward on the joystick to speed up, pull back to slow down, and push left and right to turn. If you've got a two-button joystick, you can select your weapons with a press of your thumb. The cars respond instantly to your commands and perform like you'd expect hovercars to perform—you catch major air at high speeds when cresting hills and careen wildly off of guardrails and solid objects.

So, give Zone Raiders a try if you're looking for a neat twist on Doom-style arcade fun. You just may be surprised by what you find.

TIPS

- Blasting all the kiosks on the walls along the roadside will keep the Guardian off your back.
- Remember that the map is a two-dimensional view of a 3-D landscape. It doesn't show where two roads follow the same path but at different heights.
- Speed-boost power-ups are often the only way to get to a vital section of track. If you waste one, you may have to start the level over again.
- Clever driving can force enemy vehicles to shoot each other.

Zone Raiders
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

Developer: ImageSpace
Platform: DOS CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, VGA
List Price: $44.95-$54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Simple game mechanics and fast play make Zone Raiders an addictive Doom clone.

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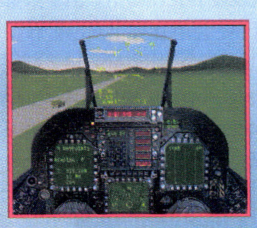
- Capt. Roger F.A. Arias

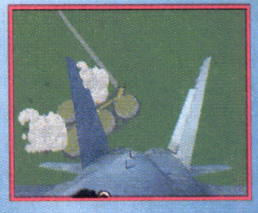
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The Hive

By Steve Klett

TIPS

- Although enemies don't always appear in the same place, you should be able to anticipate where they'll show up after a few tries at any given level.
- A Microsoft Sidewinder 3D Pro provides better game performance through its Direct X support.
- If you try to shoot every enemy you see, you won't get far in the flying sequences. Target the ones closest to you, and you'll be okay.



The Hive
Trimark Interactive
310-372-3243

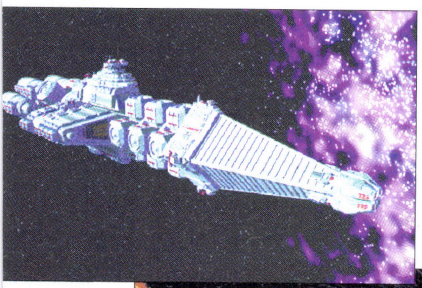
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, Windows 95, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

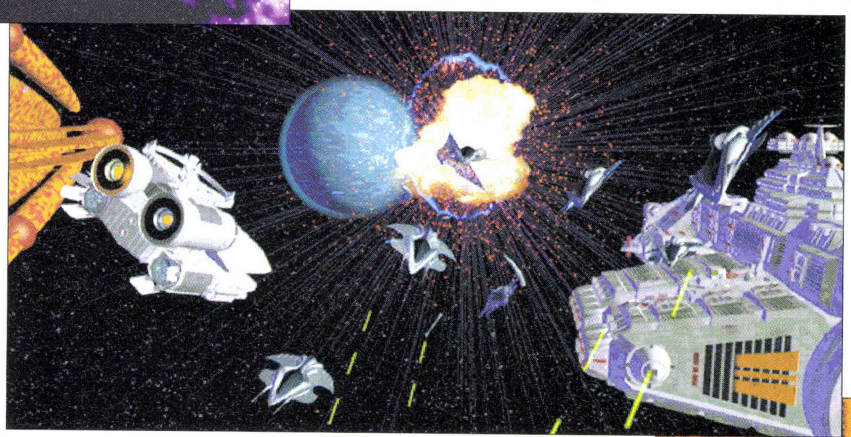
The Hive's challenging game play and cool graphics will impress hard-core action fanatics—if they're equipped with Windows 95 and a powerful PC.

One of the first original action games designed exclusively for Windows 95, Trimark's The Hive has received a ton of prerelease press. Thankfully, in a refreshing departure from most of the Win 95 games released so far, The Hive actually comes close to doing justice to all the attention.

In another nice twist, The Hive features a chilling sci-fi storyline that doesn't involve a rude awakening from a cryogenic slumber or a complete loss of memory. Instead, a people known as the "Ancients" created a deadly biotoxin from a genetically engineered species of bee-like creatures called Hivasects. In an ironic twist, the biotoxin killed all of the Ancients and has since been kept under strict quarantine by the Federation. Now, the Black Nexus Mob, masquerading as the Noir Dyne Corporation, has revived the Hivasects using ancient DNA samples and has constructed a Hive capable of producing enough biotoxin to threaten the entire galaxy.



Stunning graphics permeate The Hive.



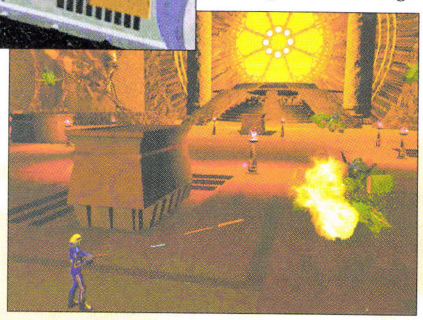
Better limber up that trigger finger, 'cause you'll be shooting 'til ya drop.

You play the part of Max, a Federation agent charged with infiltrating Noir Dyne disguised as a cargo runner. When your cover gets blown, you're suddenly faced with a massive onslaught of enemy fighters, ground troops, and Hivasects. Now you must not only try to stay alive, but also find and destroy the Hive and save the galaxy.

Cool story, but The Hive isn't about complexity. Game play boils down to shoot, shoot, shoot, and shoot some more. Similar to Rebel Assault, most of the onscreen action follows a scripted path with you directing a cursor around the screen to target enemies as they appear. The direction in which you move the cursor can also occasionally influence the path you follow during each action segment. In addition to the scripted-path segments, several unique "Panoractive" missions allow you a full 360-degree field of fire, with enemies attacking from all directions.

As Max, you pilot aircraft and jetpacks and shoot it out with various enemies on foot as you work your way through The Hive's 20 missions, which range from a botched rendezvous with a Noir Dyne destroyer to a confrontation with the Hivasect queen. Thankfully, you're not alone during all this fast, furious—and challenging—action. Federation agent Ginger Malloy keeps you updated with vital information via a video communications link.

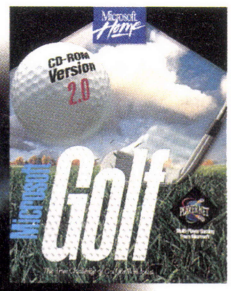
A pure action shooter with impressive photorealistic graphics, The Hive is perhaps the first game to really showcase Win 95's gaming potential. From jagged mountain ranges to complex enemy strongholds, the graphics remain first-rate. The same holds true for the game's numerous plot-advancing cinematics.



You'll need to do well on the ground as well as in the air to beat this game.

It all sounds pretty good for a game running under Windows, doesn't it? Relax, catches abound: You need a muscle-bound machine to run the game well—a 486/66 with 8MB RAM will barely suffice, and even a Pentium with 16MB of RAM will have trouble on the higher detail settings. Also, the extreme challenge of many of the action sequences may turn off some people—and the only place to go from the standard difficulty setting is to the harder one. Trimark includes a Practice mode, but it doesn't let you advance in the game. For the sequel, Trimark should consider a difficulty editor a la Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire (see review, pg 44).

If you're up to the challenge—and not easily frustrated by seeing the same scenes over and over again when you die—this excellent pure shooter will keep you occupied for hours.



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Microsoft

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For more information on Golf 2.0 and PlayerNet, log onto http://www.microsoft.com/msgolf.

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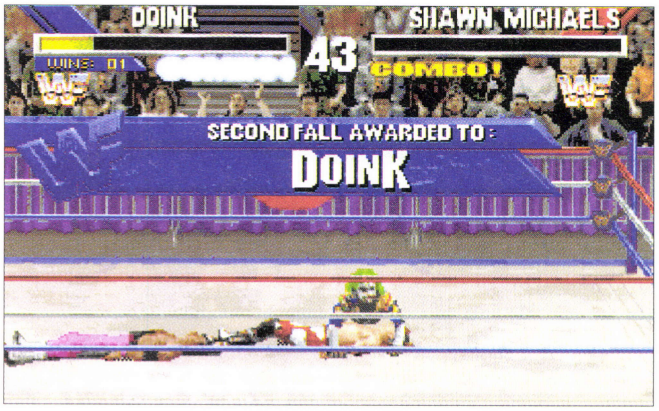
WWF WrestleMania

OK, I confess. I haven't followed pro wrestling since I was 12. I'm older now and more mature. If I want to witness fake fighting, I watch a Chuck Norris movie. If I want to see musclebound pinheads spouting torrents of trash at each other while adoring fans scream on the sidelines, I tune into pro football.

Still, I just know that I can take Doink the Clown all the way to the WWF Championship.

Don't get me wrong. Acclaim's WWF WrestleMania: The Arcade Game is even more over the top than the real thing.

WrestleMania is even more outrageous than the "real" thing.





WWF WrestleMania
Acclaim Entertainment
516-759-7800

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486SX/25, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VGA
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

But real-life cartoons like Doink or Bret "Hit Man" Hart become much more engaging when you get to send them flying around the ring, dishing out more punishment than any ten men could take.

In WrestleMania, you choose your fighter from a cast of eight WWF pros—including Yokuzuna, the Undertaker, and Razor Ramon. You then select whether to fight for the Intercontinental or WWF titles (WWF is tougher), and hit the ring—literally.

Beat the other fighters in one-on-one, two-on-one (you being the one, of course) and three-on-one matches, and you get to compete in the Royal Rumble, in which you face all eight wrestlers, three at a time. Win that, and you're the Champ!

Part Mortal Kombat and part NBA Jam, WrestleMania hooked me hard from the start. Each fighter has tons of special moves, the animations are straight from the arcade, and the sound is in your face all the time. Add the option of playing head-to-head against a human opponent, and you've got a recipe for a pile-driving good time. —*Christopher Lindquist*

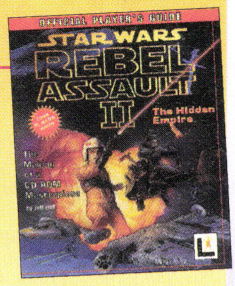
PC Entertainment SHOPPER

4 Great Books for 4 Hot Games!

Rebel Assault II Official Player's Guide

By Jeff Hoff

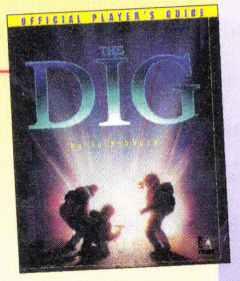
Can you foil Lord Vader's evil plot to destroy the Rebel Alliance? This guide includes strategies, cheat codes, a complete discussion of how to use the Difficulty Editor, and a through look at the making of this CD-ROM masterpiece.
$19.99
BK-369
Platform: PC CD-ROM



The Dig Official Player's Guide

By Jo Ashburn

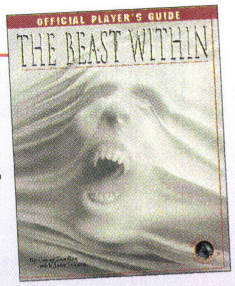
Join Commander Boston Low and his crew in a spectacular adventure that takes you from Earth to a planet that's light years from home. This guide gives you everything you need to safely pilot your crew back, including hints, tips and a complete walk-through.
$19.99
BK-361
Platform: PC CD-ROM



The Beast Within Official Player's Guide

By Corey Sandler

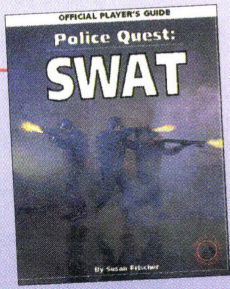
Help Gabriel Knight and his capable assistant, Grace, investigate werewolf attacks in Germany. This guide includes a comprehensive walk-through, a hint section, and a look at the creators of this amazing video adventure.
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BK-368
Platform: PC CD-ROM



Police Quest: SWAT Official Player's Guide

By Susan Frischer

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$19.99
BK-370
Platform: PC CD-ROM

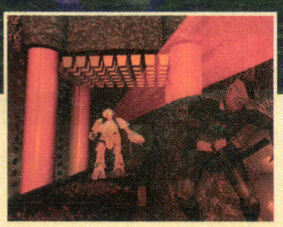


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Wetlands


Wetlands' action is furious, but it doesn't last very long.

By definition, arcade shooters engage your index finger more than your mind. But while Wetlands does offer serious rapid-fire action, it isn't just a trigger-finger exercise.

You take the role of John Cole, a bounty hunter hired by The Federation to bring an escaped felon and scientist named Nahj to justice. To do so, you must fight your way through 21 fast-action arcade sequences. Along the way, you'll find multiple forms of arcade game play: straight-ahead fighter battles in space, first-person firefights with enemy soldiers, and overhead bombing raids of underwater defense systems. However, as with close cousins Cyberia and Rebel Assault, movement is limited to a predetermined track along which you encounter your enemies and targets.

Nonetheless, the action stays white-knuckle. Partner this with the variety of environments—from space to ocean to maze—and different types of transportation—including spaceships, speeder bikes, and subway trains—and you have a diverse, challenging experience. Unfortunately, the ride's a bit short; the action segments pass quickly, even on the highest skill setting.

Wetlands
New World Computing
800-325-8898



Developer: Hypnotix
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, VGA, Sound Blaster-compatible
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

You'll enjoy the scenery along the way, though. Wetlands' comic-style treatment of Cole, Nahj, and assorted bad guys is a refreshing change from the droid-like, computer-rendered characters in most games. These animated characters have expression and realistic motion, thanks to the use of digital footage of human actors.

Then again, cool art doesn't necessarily warrant a $50 price tag. While Wetlands' great look offers the perfect opportunity to develop real character relationships and plot, the storyline fades as the game proceeds. The arcade action sequences lose a bit of their tension and meaning as you race toward the grand finale.

Still, based on its top-notch graphics and exciting arcade game play, Wetlands will be a pleasant surprise for arcade addicts.

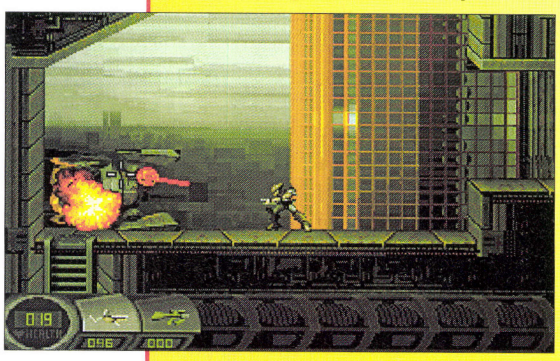
—Bill Meyer

Abuse

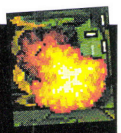
The 2-D action/adventure lives. Abuse, a vintage blaster from new publisher Crack Dot Com, recalls the best of the genre, and adds a few new twists.

You're charged with infiltrating a dark and tangled alien complex: 18 levels worth of shafts, passages, gun emplacements, ceiling-crawling alien "Ants," teleports, fake walls, and secret areas. All the while, you'll be collecting hearts to sustain your life as well as ammo for a range of increasingly powerful weapons.

This is where things get interesting. Abuse gives players a full 360-degree field of fire by virtue of a dual control system that uses the keyboard for movement and the mouse for aiming. You no longer have to fire in the direction you're headed. This freedom of action gives the game realism and depth that is unprecedented in the genre.


A keyboard/mouse control scheme gives Abuse a 360-degree field of fire.

Abuse
Crack Dot Com
800-810-0022



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386, 4MB RAM, VESA-compatible VGA, mouse
List Price: $45

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Then there are the extras. Typically, action-game level editors arrive some weeks after a game's release, if they arrive at all. Crack Dot Com includes a menu-driven, what-you-see-is-what-you-get editor right in the box.

Still, Abuse has a few rough edges. The keyboard/mouse control system isn't ideal—it's too busy—and it's a shame that there's no support for hat-equipped joysticks.

The graphics are a mixed bag, too. Some elements, like the giant, burnished metallic balls that drop down on your character, are genuinely beautiful. But the enemies come off blocky. You won't find any printed documentation, either, and most of the docs on the CD are specific to the editor or just unrevealing.

But you'll learn while you burn down Ants—the first level is a tutorial—and there's nothing wrong here that a long night of play won't make you forget. Abuse is great fun, and that's enough.

—Peter Olafson

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Psycho Pinball



Psycho Pinball gives PC pin fans another place to play.

The recent deluge of pinball games for the PC has given fans of the genre plenty of choices. Now along comes Psycho Pinball from Philips Media, and while it doesn't tilt, it doesn't exactly rack up the credits either.

As with so many other pin sims, Psycho Pinball presents you with a choice of tables—four in this case, including undersea and midway circus adventures. The table physics are fine, the game's sound is okay if not spectacular, and the tables themselves look quite good in high-res mode. The playing field scrolls up and down as you play, like most other pinball games (Sierra's 3-D Ultra Pinball being a notable exception), making it difficult to line up shots on occasion.

In other words, if you don't expect anything new from a pinball game, you won't be disappointed.

—Christopher Lindquist

Psycho Pinball
Philips Media
415-345-5300

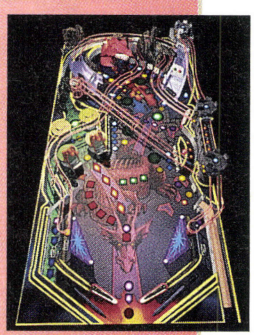
Developer: Codemasters
Platform: DOS
Requires: 486DX/50, 4MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

Full Tilt! Pinball

Windows 95 owners who picked up Microsoft's Plus! companion package may have enjoyed Space Cadet, the pinball game included on the disc. If you just couldn't get enough of it, Maxis brings you more with Full Tilt! Pinball, a collection of three hi-res tables that includes the full version of Space Cadet, complete with new animations and multiball capability.

Thankfully, Full Tilt! ditches the traditional nausea-inducing scrolling screen. Unlike Sierra On-Line's superior 3-D Ultra Pinball, however, the Full Tilt! tables don't take advantage of the PC screen, simply shrinking the traditional table shape to fit. The result is a nice-looking, great-sounding, yet unoriginal game—little different from just about every other high-res pinball sim on the market. However, its low price makes it a good value. *—Christopher Lindquist*


Maxis stops Sim-ing long enough to play a pretty good bit of pinball.

Full Tilt! Pinball
Maxis
800-336-2947

Developer: Cinematronics
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Expect No Mercy

If all you've got is hype, use it. That seems to be the philosophy behind Expect No Mercy, the "most explosive, fast-action fighting game ever!"—if you believe the blood-soaked box.

Don't.

Animation, graphics, speed, responsiveness, game design—you name it, and Expect No Mercy is probably mediocre or worse at it. Heck, you can't even jump over your opponents to fight 'em from the right. Sure, Microforum added some variety by including a couple of puzzle/action sections, but these segments mostly just get in the way. Of course, getting in the way of this game is hardly an obstruction of justice.

If you want to fight on your PC, go with Mortal Kombat. Meanwhile, Expect No Mercy should expect an early grave.

—Christopher Lindquist


Don't expect much from Expect No Mercy.

Expect No Mercy
Microforum
800-465-2323

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/50, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Windows-compatible sound card, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $68.95

GAME PLAY:	★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★

Thexder for Windows 95

Anyone who played PC games in the mid-'80s is bound to have fond memories of Thexder, the little morphing fella who cheerfully blasted his way through countless enemies and into our hearts.

The new Thexder has the mandatory laundry list of Windows 95 features, including modem support and "multi-threading" Direct Input and Direct Sound. What does that all mean? Unfortunately, not much.

In the rush to create and market Windows 95 games, some developers seem to be forgetting the first rule of good computer games: fun first, technology second. As a technology demo, Thexder is fine. As a game, it's not really much fun.

—Christopher Lindquist


Thexder morphs its way into the '90s on Windows 95.

Thexder for Windows 95
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Platform: Win 95
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, Super VGA
Street Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

Locus



Average game play and lackluster graphics hobble Locus.

Many a game player has been known to mutter, "If only this game was as cool as the pictures on the box." Folks will probably be echoing that remark after buying Zombie's new game Locus.

The game's premise sounds interesting enough. In the year 2095, only one international pastime remains: violent tournaments called Triads that take place in giant arenas orbiting the Earth. Each Triad pits a trio of two-player teams against each other in three matches, each of which takes place in stadiums of different geometries such as rings and spheres. Team members dart around on high-tech cycles and win matches by collecting and firing three balls into opposing goals. Eliminate both teams in two out of three contests, and you'll move on to the next Triad—or be drafted by a stronger team.

Unfortunately, the game's claim of fast, seamless action in a dazzling 3-D environment is not exactly true. If you don't have a high-end Pentium, you won't be able to run Locus full-screen at a respectable frame rate in full detail. Owners of 486 machines will have to settle for a small, far less dramatic window or be forced to endure herky-jerky game play.

Locus does offer an array of different cycles and teams, a dozen well-designed stadiums, and support for multiplayer network games and head-mounted displays. But load delays hamper cycle control during the action, especially when you emerge from the starting tunnel into an arena. You also won't find some details that you'd expect from a high-end "virtual-reality game," such as quality cut-scene animations, good sound effects, team and player info, support for multibutton joysticks, and narrated play-by-play.

In the end, Locus simply isn't as hip as its box would lead you to believe.

—Bill Meyer



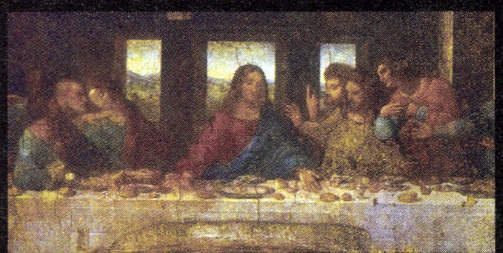
Locus
GT Interactive
800-332-4300

Developer: Zombie
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 6.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

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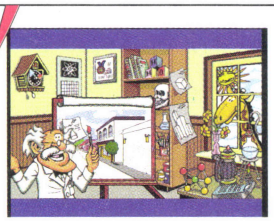
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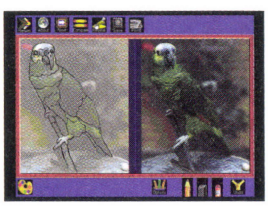
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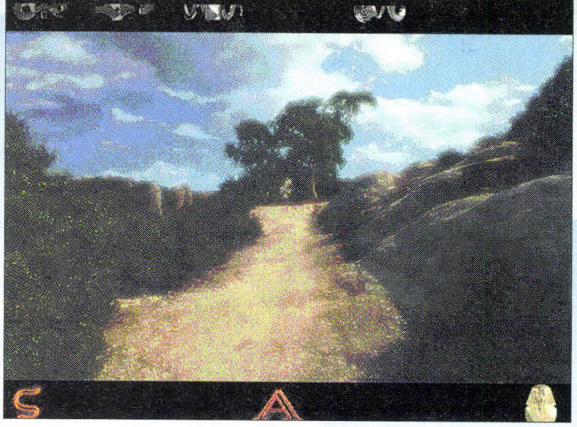
"Babes, bombs and bug-eyed monsters—is this the perfect game, or what?"—*Game Players*

"...an editable video world, player-controlled movement and a Doom-like play style... a distinct pay back in realism and replay value."— *Next Generation*

Welcome to the Future

You wander rocky paths along the coastline, searching for strange symbols in the landscape, hoping to figure out why you're here. Stunning images and haunting music draw you deeper into the adventure, and before you know it, three hours have passed.

Myst? No. This is Welcome to the Future, Blue Sky Entertainment's take on the Myst phenomenon. Like its top-selling inspiration, Welcome to the Future deals with the intersection of the past and the future, and the discovery of hidden worlds. But it's not entirely a clone: The game stresses the journey more than the reward. You won't find any brain-bending puzzles here, and sensory experiences take precedence over plot.



Wandering through Welcome to the Future's world is like taking a Saturday-afternoon hike.



Welcome to The Future
Blue Sky Entertainment
310-306-0683

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, double speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $45-$55

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

Despite the lack of serious puzzles, Welcome to the Future is not entirely a cakewalk. With no obvious map of your surroundings, it's easy to get lost as you point-and-click your way through the twisted paths along the game's painterly landscape. If you get stuck, you have two choices: play the game in Explore mode, which lets you wander everywhere freely, or jump straight to the highlights with one of six supplied saved games.

Blue Sky used digitized photos and hand-painted backgrounds to create the ultra-realistic scenery. If you have the processor power (read: a Pentium) you owe it to yourself to play the game in 24-bit color mode. The game's crisp, new-age sound track is equally impressive.

The rich sound and graphics, coupled with the simple game play, make playing Welcome to the Future a rather mindless, relaxing experience. Gamers interested in a brain-taxing challenge won't find it here, but people looking for an alternative experience on the computer will be richly rewarded. —*Christine Grech*

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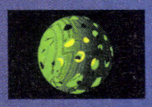
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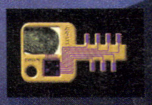
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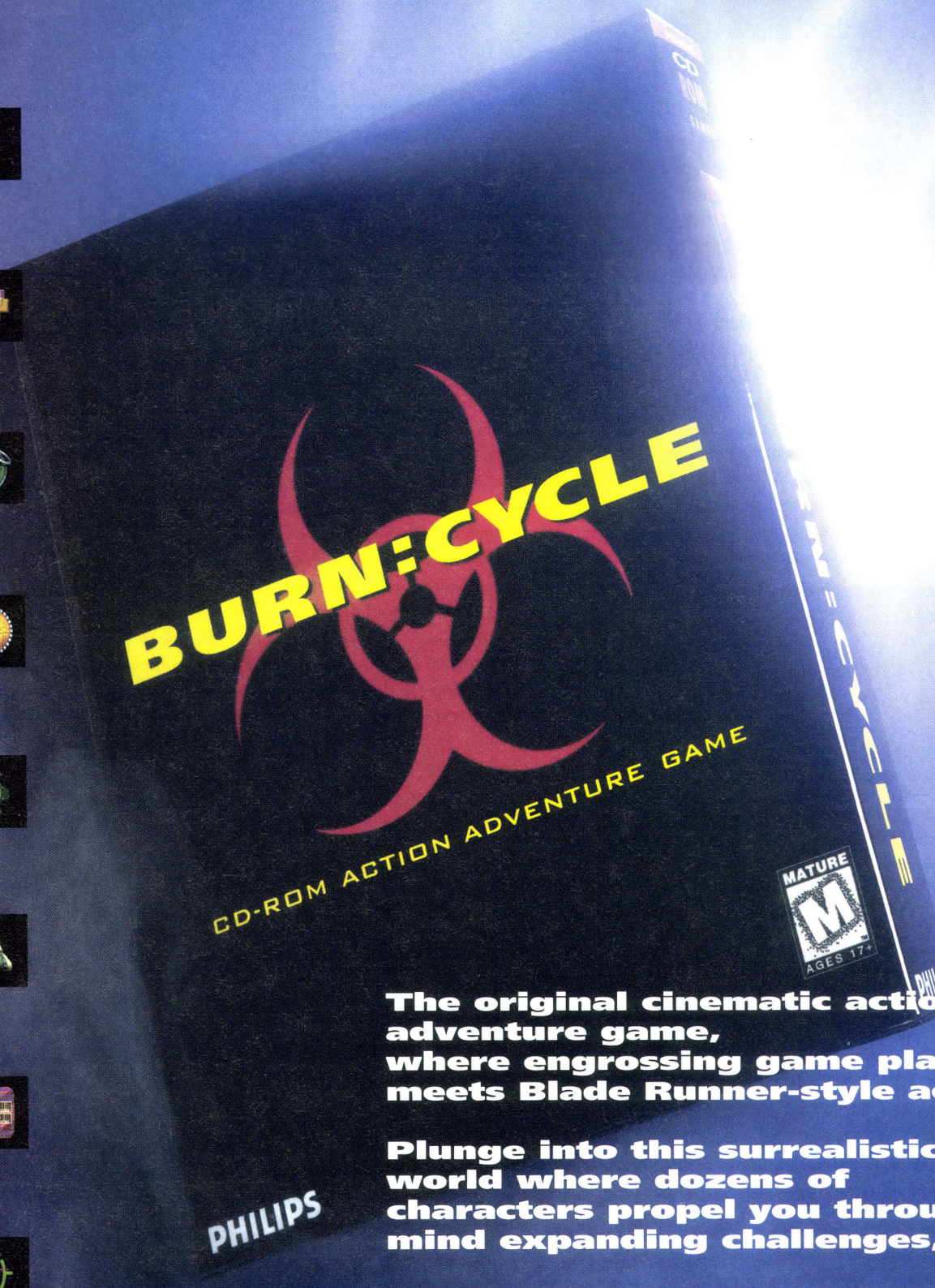












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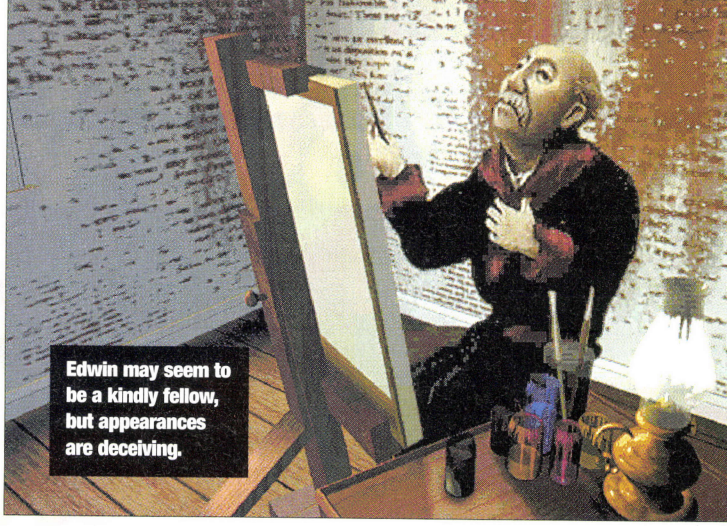
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The Dark Eye

By David Israels



Edwin may seem to be a kindly fellow, but appearances are deceiving.

Touted by the media and its creators at Inscape as the next step in interactive storytelling, The Dark Eye lifts the macabre world of Edgar Allen Poe from the confines of print and places it into the play-with-me environment of 3-D computer gaming. The game, which also seeks to break the shackles of the computer adventure genre, wants to offer players an emotionally charged experience that immerses them in a chilling world drawn from the imagination of Poe.

The game's confusing structure uses two states of consciousness to relate the narrative. In the waking state, you explore the mansion of the mad painter Edwin in a malevolent Poe-like tale. As the overall plot progresses, you'll fall into a nightmare state that lets you enter alternate realities. Those realities allow you to unfold the interactive renditions of three dark and eerie Poe stories—"The Cask of Amontillado," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "Berenice."

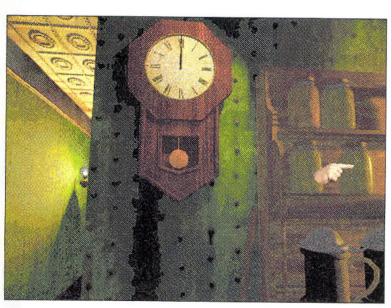
The game's creative talent delivers exceptional material. Professional actors produce first-rate voice acting, including a sterling performance by William S. Burroughs as Edwin; the score and sound design are superb; and the brilliant use of 28 stop-motion animated puppets makes for eye-popping Super VGA graphics.



Carnival season sets the backdrop for "The Cask Of Amontillado."

Sadly, such top-notch material couldn't inoculate The Dark Eye from misconceived design decisions, less-than-ideal graphics performance, and technical glitches.

On the surface, The Dark Eye's game play is unique. You won't find a traditional goal: Your job instead is to traverse the narrative and to delight in the experience of telling yourself a story by interacting with the game's exquisitely articulated puppet characters and finely rendered objects.



When the clock strikes midnight, bad stuff happens in the Poe tale "Berenice."

But you must also negotiate hackneyed navigation puzzles. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," for instance, you can't use a lantern and get past an initial segment until you walk up to a clock and advance the time. I found that the puzzles interrupted the narrative, made game play frustrating, and distanced me from the stories' emotional content.

The game also messes unnecessarily with point of view. You can play the three Poe stories either as the killer or victim. But the game's creators ignored the fact that Poe's art derives its strength from his tight control of narrative viewpoint. For instance, the horror in "Berenice" works because you're in the killer's head as his monomania consumes him. Re-enacting the tale from the victim's perspective seems silly.

More mundane problems also exist. The interface uses a hand-shaped cursor as the game's navigation device. Move the hand across the screen, and it will point in different directions or close its fingers to indicate objects you can manipulate. Unfortunately, this essential tool is unresponsive. When you move the mouse, there's an unacceptable wait for the hand-cursor to react.

Other annoyances include a save-game feature that saves only at certain points, forcing you to replay chunks of the game. Also, in too many scenes, the QuickTime movies aren't integrated properly with the background art, interrupting your suspension of disbelief.

While The Dark Eye fails to achieve its hoped-for breakthrough status, its makers deserve high praise for moving computer gaming in the right direction. Perhaps next time, their creative results will be worthy of their novel ideas.

The Dark Eye
Inscape
800-693-3253

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Windows-compatible sound card
Street Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

A valiant attempt to advance the artistry of interactive narrative is marred by poor design and performance problems.

TIPS

- **Keep going back to the same places. Over time, objects and people will reveal new things about themselves.**
- **You can enter each Poe tale through one of two objects. Depending on which one you pick, you'll be either the killer or victim.**
- **The game contains two Easter eggs—a reading of the poem "Annabel Lee" and a condensed version of "The Masque of The Red Death." You'll find them as you're exploring the mansion in the nightmare state.**
- **You can't complete the overall plot until you finish the three Poe tales.**

BUGS

On some machines, the sound cuts out, making it impossible to finish your game session.

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Shivers

By Hermann Peterscheck



Clever puzzles and intriguing environments make Shivers more than a mere Myst clone.



Classic adventure puzzles abound: How will you open this box?



You won't find much blood and gore here, but you will find plenty of chills.



Can you survive the night inside Prof. Windelnot's strange world?

The true test of any mystery/adventure game is how quickly it grabs you and how long before it lets you go. How will you unlock that door? Where does that passage lead? What is the butler's deep, dark secret? All the while, the ever-present sense of possible demise should lie around every turn. Sierra On-Line's mystery/adventure game, Shivers, delivers all this in spades.

As the game (designed in part by King's Quest creator Roberta Williams) begins, you accept your friend's dare to spend a night locked behind the fence that surrounds Prof. Windelnot's museum. Unfortunately, as the late professor's ghost soon relates, a gaggle of life-essence–stealing "ixupi" have overrun the place.

To defeat these mischievous spirits, you must capture them within corresponding jars found scattered around the museum. To make things more difficult, you must also solve the late professor's puzzles to gain access to the entire museum and find all the jars. But beware, if you use a jar on the wrong ixupi, the little monster takes it and hides it somewhere else in the museum. Worse, the ixupi will also steal a portion of your life-essence, and you must recapture the little devil to get it back.

Unlike Sierra's gore-filled Phantasmagoria, Shivers is more spooky than scary—more *Scooby-Doo* than *Psycho*. Sure, you'll run into a few corpses here and there, but that's about as graphic as it gets. Instead of blood, intriguing or challenging puzzles yield surprising results. For example, the front door won't get you into this museum.

Beyond the puzzles, the game scores points with its unusual setting. A gazebo, a park bench, and a Stonehenge-like shrine stand side-by-side with a giant Mayan pyramid. Shivers is anything but recycled.

A point-and-click Myst-like interface assists your exploration of Prof. Windelnot's strange world. Tons of icons won't block your way, and you won't have to sift through mountains of inventory items. Even better, a "virtual journal" records every piece of important information for instant recall with the "flashback" option. No more copying critical hieroglyphics onto a piece of paper, only to lose it just when you finally need it.

Want more? A proper mood-setting original music score and some of the best sound effects ever in an adventure game accompany beautifully rendered hand-drawn graphics. Dogs bark in the distance, a brook babbles at your feet, and Gregorian chants add atmosphere to this well-composed, attractive world.

Shivers recreates Myst's quieting surreal atmosphere, while also indulging a darker side. On a long winter night, it is a perfect companion for that cup of hot chocolate and marshmallows.



TIPS

- When starting out, make sure you look everywhere for the six symbols. Be sure to note their color.
- Looking at things from different directions may provide different clues.

Shivers
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707



Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486SX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or later, 256-color VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Shivers will send chills down the spine of any mystery/adventure game lover.

Mission Critical

By Barry Brenesal

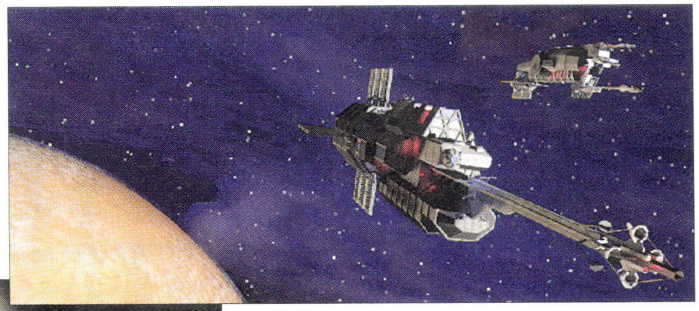


Visually stunning environments await.

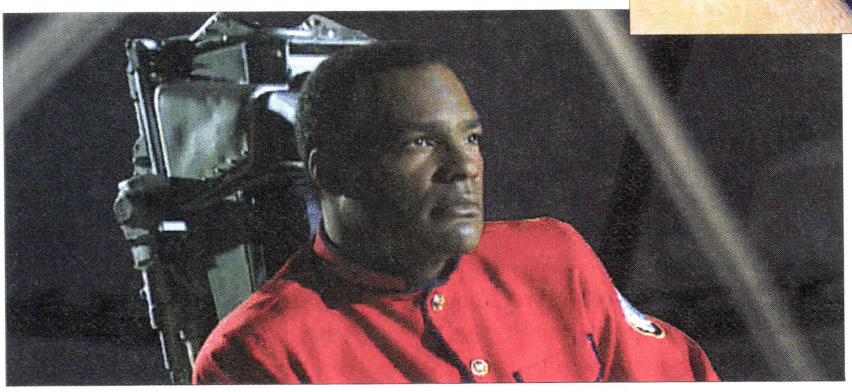
In the year 2134, a group of Colonial planets and Earth nations seek peaceful secession from the World Government. The governing body's reaction is swift and deadly: It attacks the coalition ship *Lexington*. As the only survivor, you must explore the crippled ship and find the means to travel far into the future, where the decisions you make could forever change the course of human development.

So runs the compelling plot of Mission Critical, Legend's latest adventure.

From the start, the game's aesthetics prove impressive. True, Legend has delivered this smooth, sophisticated kind of Super VGA artwork before in the mediocre Deathgate.



Explore the shattered remains of the *Lexington* to find a doorway to the future.



Michael Dorn stars as your captain.

However, the company usually failed to deliver quantity along with quality; Mission Critical has both. You'll find 120 locations to explore on the *Lexington* alone, with 400 different views of the scenery. Smooth movement glides you between sites, rather like Sanctuary Woods' Journeyman Project 2: Buried In Time, but much quicker. A moody and beautifully crafted musical soundtrack helps set the game's tone.

The three-disc game features a mixed bag of live-action sequences that help propel the plot. Voice actor Henry Strozier's before-the-cameras performance as Admiral Decker is stiff and unconvincing. Meanwhile, Michael Dorn (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Worf) is predictably first-rate as the *Lexington*'s commander. However, it is Patricia Charbonneau (*Robocop II*) who steals the show with a superlative performance as Jennifer Tran.

Mission Critical's puzzles vary in difficulty, but you won't find any of the teasing sort that require you to play find-the-right-word regardless of the logic of the situation. For example, when you want to fix a punctured bulkhead, you must locate the source of the leak, find a repair kit, and use it. Everything proceeds sensibly—and in linear fashion. You don't write this novel; you follow it, attempting always to find your character's only path to success. Figure it all out, and the alliance will be preserved. Fail, and the hope of Earth is doomed—until you reload that last saved game.

One caveat about Mission Critical: To suspend disbelief and enjoy the game, you must approve of the game's storyline—and you may not. Simply put, Mission Critical supports the idea of sentient, non-emotional machines as the next stage in positive evolution. If you agree with this view, great; you're in for a treat. If you feel that smelly, wonderful old emotions are the essence of life and that logic is a tool used to make bigger toys for grownup children, check out Cyberdreams' I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream instead (see review, page 68).

One last note: Legend's tech support staff was very helpful in dealing with some problems encountered under Windows 95 (problems with Windows, not the game). Be warned that you may encounter some graphics and sound compatibility problems under Microsoft's latest.

That said, this is one quality adventure that will really grab your attention and hold it.

TIPS

- Get the emergency repair unit from the first computer terminal you find.
- Look for any recorded messages (notepads, computers, recorders). Listen to, read, or watch all of them.
- Check with the *Lexington* onboard computers whenever possible to see the changes in your status and access.

Mission Critical
Legend Entertainment
703-222-8500

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $55

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

An extremely handsome, traditionally linear graphic adventure sure to please fans of the genre.

ADVENTURE

Aliens

By Shane Mooney



Aliens' puzzles are frustratingly difficult.

On a mysterious and forgotten space base located on the far outreaches of the universe...

Homely, ain't he?



You'll have to do a lot of walking, but at least the scenery is really nice.

Few movie monsters have gone from Saturday afternoon fright to cultural icons that stay with us long after the credits roll. We all remember the Creature From The Black Lagoon, for example, but who can recall the Creature From Boggy Creek—at least without laughing?

The H.R. Giger-inspired Aliens have become the Frankenstein's monster of our era. They have seen life as blockbuster movies, comic books, and now arrive as a computer adventure game. Unfortunately, this is one that's destined to be far more forgettable than the creatures that inspired it.

Starting out very much like the first movie, *Alien*, you and three other crew members of the terraforming ship *USS Sheridan* find yourselves thawing out from cryogenic suspension to answer a distress call from the mining planet B54-C. After figuring out how to successfully land the ship on the planet, you've got to stop the Aliens that are bent on having you for lunch.

Since the game is based on the comic book and not the movie, it discloses the history of the Aliens and builds a compassion for them. Eventually, you'll discover an alien even deadlier and more sinister than the ones you're already battling. Your crew and your former enemy, the Aliens, will have to join forces to defeat this darker creature.

The game's graphics are some of the best-looking anywhere, with 3-D Aliens that have to be seen to be believed. Naturally, all this great artwork comes with a price—namely, that you don't have complete freedom of movement. Instead, Aliens relies on a more constrained interface more like Myst or The 7th Guest than, say, Full Throttle. Looking from either a first-person perspective or an overhead view, you click on the hot spots that say "Turn Right" or "Go Down," and you are given a brief cut scene that shows you walking up stairs, down halls, or what have you. You interact with the characters by selecting from a multiple-choice list of questions, finding out all the while just how much everyone dislikes you.

Unfortunately, after the artwork, the rest of the game falls flat. The voice acting is pretty poor, and the music is uninspired. But it's the game play that'll have you fighting the Babbages' store manager for a refund. The puzzles redefine the term enigmatic: To say that they're tough would be like saying Bill Gates is doing pretty well financially. But the worst part is that the game play itself fails to capture that elusive element that sucks you into a game's world, keeping you on the edge of your seat for fear of a wrong decision, compelling you to see what lies around the next turn. As it stands, instead of giving you chills, Aliens gives you yawns. This game turns a top-notch horror flick into a *Mystery Science Theater 3000* reject.

So what's an anxious adventure die-hard to do? Well, if you're truly desperate for kicks, this game may appeal to you. But overall, you'd probably have more fun popping in your old Full Throttle disc and seeing if you can play it blindfolded.



TIPS

• Having trouble knowing what to do once you land on B54-C? Be sure to check all the rooms (turn the bulkhead door ON using the computer), and search all the drawers and cabinets. • Try to get that green card in Lora's pants leg by using the "You're not the only one who's lost someone" chat. • If you're having a problem finding the nebulous hand that you'll need later in the game to get through the force field, go to the room where you found the robot and look around. See that little switch next to the stairs? Flip it. A little red light will appear above it. Now go back out to the main bay (where you first entered the base). Go up the stairs and USE the red card in the key lock below the computer screen. Turn around, and the door to the right of the boxes should be open.

Aliens
Mindscape
800-283-8499



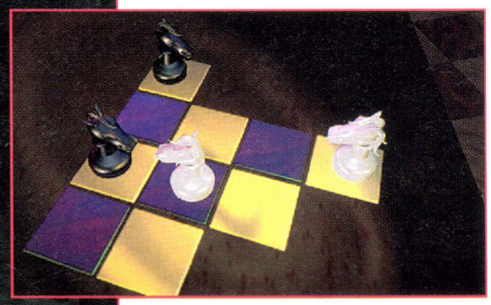
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

For adventure die-hards only. Aliens is proof positive that great graphics do not a great game make.

The 11th Hour

By Michael Lasky



This puzzle would give Bobby Fischer a headache.



Welcome to the foreboding home of the late Henry Stauf.

Ah, Mrs. Cleaver, I presume.

If you're among the thousands of gamers who thought you'd sent demented toymaker Henry Stauf straight to Hell when you completed The 7th Guest, think again. Stauf is back, and he's gleefully nastier than ever in the much-awaited—and long-delayed—The 11th Hour.

It's tough to top a million-seller, but Trilobyte has done its best to up the ante the second time around. For starters, The 11th Hour comes on four discs instead of two. Trilobyte also has honed its "Groovie" video compression technology to produce nearly full-screen, 30-frames-per-second TV-quality video. Not only that, the rich music, sound effects, and voices now resonate with distinct stereo separation.

Of course, game play is the thing, isn't it? So this time Mr. Stauf has filled his hell house with 13 logic puzzles and 6 artificial intelligence games even more diabolically clever than those in The 7th Guest. Therein lies one of The 11th Hour's problems: The puzzles are tough enough to tax a member of Mensa. Even the very first brain twister encountered in the front foyer requires a knowledge of chess that would keep Bobby Fischer checked out.

The game itself follows a linear path. You unlock each subsequent room or passageway only by solving the previous puzzle, so it can take a long, long time to get anywhere. Worse, you have to finish the game before the end of the 11th hour—and you enter the Stauf mansion as the clock chimes seven. At midnight, the house chews you up, and you can practically hear it belch.

That's what happened to Robin Morales, producer for the fictional *Case Unsolved* TV show. Seeking out unsolved murders 70 years after The 7th Guest, she ventures into the mansion and promptly disappears. You assume the role of Carl Denning, Robin's star reporter and caddish lover, who's come to find her. That's the next problem. Carl is portrayed as an unfeeling male-chauvinist putz. He is so unappealing, you practically root for the house to win when he goes in looking for Robin. As you play through the game and learn more about her, though, you may not be so anxious to save her. In fact, at some point you'll have to choose between three women, and your choice will determine the outcome of the game.

Once inside the house, the GameBook, a palmtop computer device that offers clues and video teaser clips, helps guide Carl around. If you really get stuck, the GameBook can provide hints and will even solve puzzles for you—but without demonstrating the solution. It's a godsend for gamers of less-than-epic puzzle-solving abilities.

When you do figure out (or request) a solution, the GameBook provides a clue for one of the game's 42 "treasure hunts"—another new feature in The 11th Hour. Decipher the clues, find the object, and you'll be rewarded with yet another video clip. As each hour in the house comes to a close, you'll be treated to a longer, uninterrupted dramatic sequence that fleshes out the story more—but only if you've solved enough puzzles.

Finish the game completely, and you can watch all the video (about 65 minutes worth) from beginning to end. Unlike almost all multimedia video to date, this footage works on its own—with or without the game. Performed by veteran actors recruited from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the story maintains interest from its intriguing start to its loony ending. Reprising his role as Stauf, Rob Hirschboeck is the Vincent Price of multimedia (see "At The 11th Hour: Stauf Speaks," *Electronic Entertainment*, November 1995, page 73)—at once menacing and campy.

But be prepared to spend many, many hours in the Stauf mansion. You'll have to do cartwheels with your brain to beat the house before it swallows you whole. Gulp!

The 11th Hour
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

Developer: Trilobyte
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $65-75

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

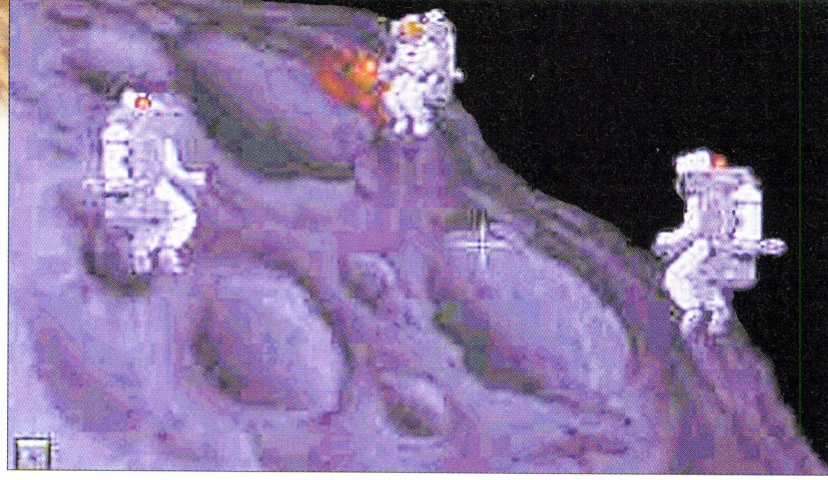
This terrific sequel is an exceptionally high-quality video-based game that works on many levels—marred only by too-difficult puzzles.

TIPS

- **Make sure you read the "READ ME" file, which offers otherwise undocumented navigation tips.**
- **Even helpful clues come as riddles. Repeated clicks on the Help button will make them clearer.**
- **You are trying to beat the clock, but to enter the picture gallery you must go into the clock.**
- **Get started in the library on the first floor. Solve the bookshelf puzzle, and you are on your way.**

The Dig

By Shane Mooney



All the nukes that are fit to plant: You must carefully place nuclear bombs on the asteroid's surface to knock it into orbit around Earth.

When it comes to building anticipation, few games can top The Dig. It's no wonder: Years in the making, with more science-fiction personalities behind it than a *Star Trek* convention, and coming from the creators of the wonderful Full Throttle and Sam and Max Hit The Road, The Dig appeared to hold a universe of promise.

Unfortunately, many hyped-up games fall short of expectations. Luckily, this isn't the case with The Dig, although if you're expecting Sam and Max Try To Dig Their Way Out Of This One, you'll probably be disappointed with the rather slow first half-hour of game play. Once you get to The Dig's meat-and-potatoes, however, it'll suck you into its world and give your spouse yet another reason to file for divorce.

The Dig
LucasArts Entertainment
800-985-8227



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 6.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $44.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

High production values make The Dig hard to pass up.

As the story goes, in the not-too-distant future, an asteroid mysteriously appears and assumes a decaying orbit around Earth, threatening to destroy life as we know it. NASA calls upon ace astronaut Boston Low to lead a space shuttle mission to plant nukes on the asteroid—affectionately labeled Attilla. The goal? Blast the rock into a stable orbit. Amazingly enough, Low succeeds, then sets out with journalist Maggie Robbins and archaeologist Ludger Brink to explore Earth's new moon.

Unfortunately, as you soon discover, Attilla is not really an asteroid. In fact, it's completely hollow. When the crew enters the cavity, the orbitting rock activates and whisks the whole lot off to an alien planet in a galaxy far, far away. Bad news. Now Boston and his two teammates must find food and water, and figure out what the hell is going on.

Based on a story idea by Steven Spielberg, The Dig includes dialogue co-written by Hugo Award-winning writer Orson Scott Card, as well as voice-acting by Robert Patrick (as Boston Low), the bad guy in *Terminator 2*. If that's not enough sci-fi names for you, how about special effects by Lucas-owned Industrial Light and Magic? With names like that, it's gotta be good.

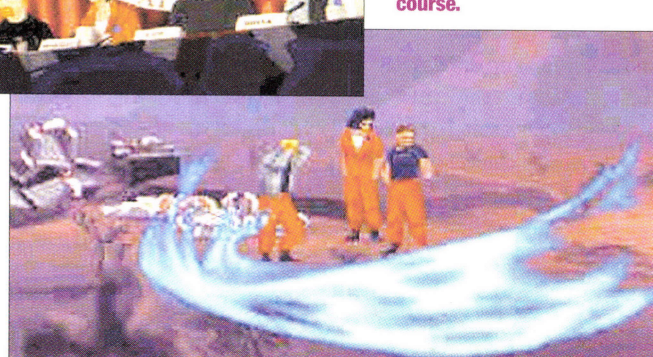
And it is. Wonderful 3-D background art of alien environments, an enthralling story line, and excellent sound effects and music create a complete gaming experience. Plus, an almost invisible interface makes The Dig a joy to play. For example, instead of selecting from a choice of actions—such as look, pick up, or talk to—you merely click on the object in question, and if anything can happen, it will. The game's puzzles still take some thinking, but they can be solved without resorting to 900 numbers, strategy guides, or threatening phone calls to tech-support.

The Dig does have a few faults, however. For starters, the characters are portrayed in boring VGA. Not only that, the dialogue and voice-acting aren't quite on par with Full Throttle, although they are still light-years ahead of most other games on the market.

But these are minor beefs that will hardly have you uninstalling The Dig from your hard drive anytime soon. If you're an adventure gaming fan, dig up The Dig.



In just three weeks, NASA assembled a Space Shuttle team to fly to the asteroid Attilla and steer it onto a steadier course.

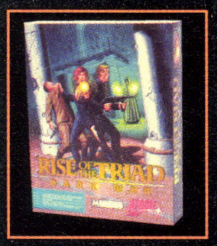


Aliens, sea-monsters, and ghosts, oh-my: A ghost-like apparition pops up regularly to make things even more confusing.



TIPS

- **Brink's dead? Don't worry about it, it's only temporary.**
- **Stuck trying to figure out how to operate that diamond-shaped droid? You need to think of the keypad console as a controller, specifying which directions you want the droid to move. Enter the sequence you want the droid to take, and then hit the triangular button on the other console to get him to do it.**
- **To figure out how to re-assemble the fresh turtle carcass, look to the fossil to the left of the path for clues.**
- **Once you've set up the dowel, hook, rib-cage, and rod as your trap to catch that rat-like creature, you don't need bait, you just need to chase him into it. Once trapped, put the gold necklace on him and use your blue orb to locate him and the machine part you need.**



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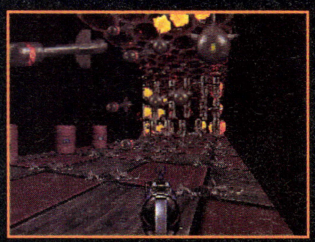
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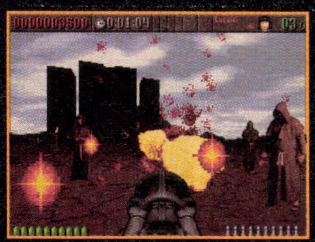
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I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream



Ordinary graphics hide exemplary game play.

A computer designed to efficiently engineer death on a worldwide scale is an awesome, fearful thing but not as terrifying as that same computer become sentient—and insane. In Cyberdreams' I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream, an unusual adventure game based on science fiction master Harlan Ellison's classic short story, such a machine exists.



GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

The computer, AM, has destroyed the human race, save for five even more unlucky survivors whom it keeps alive eternally to torture and torment deep inside its virtual body. Now AM has evolved a new game: It proposes to test the five captives. A passing grade equals freedom.

Five scenarios confront each captive with his or her own personal nightmare. For example, Ellen, the rape victim, must challenge her hysteria and confront memories of the past. Nimdok, who conducted Nazi "medical research" on Jews during WWII, must face his own inhumanity. And since AM controls reality, it can set the rules and change them as it sees fit.

I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream bypasses the standard linear mechanics of most adventure games. Sure, you still pick up and manipulate objects. But you also have to make decisions about what to do and say, and what objects to use where several might apply.

All of the characters, you see, have Moral Barometers, a measure of their inner lives. Once you've finished the five initial scenarios, you'll face another, much tougher plot, in which morality makes the difference between AM's final triumph and his destruction.

Visually, I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream is average—barely. But Ellison's own wonderfully overwrought performance as AM leads the excellent voice acting.

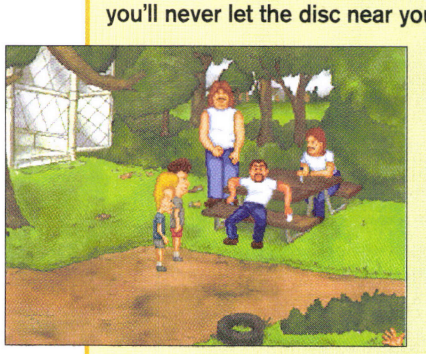
This game breaks some set-in-stone rules about content and victory conditions, no doubt because of Ellison's participation (see interview, page 13). Whether it's a harbinger of more complex (and interesting) games to come or just a bright pebble on a well-worn path, I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream brings welcome depth to a genre not noted for it. *—Barry Brenesal*

Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity



GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

Huh. Huh huh, huh huh (heh heh), huh (heh heh) huh. Yes, it can only be Beavis and Butt-head. The two semi-animated morons have busted out of their MTV cages into Virtual Stupidity, a game that won't change a single person's feelings about the cartoon pair. Like 'em, and this game will be right up your alley. Hate 'em, and you'll never let the disc near your PC.



What self-respecting gang would ever want these dweebs?

Almost able to pass as just another wacky episode of the cartoon series, the game is aimed squarely at fans of the perverse pair. Beavis and Butt-head show off their usual brand of idiot derring-do in a quest to join the gang led by Todd, the hot-rodding thug who defines cool in B&B's daydreams.

The pair gets to kick out of the main storyline into several mini-games, such as Hock-a-loogie, which you win by spitting a mega-loogie off the high-school roof onto Principal McVicker's head. Beavis even gets to morph into his alter-ego Cornholio, which will enable him to steal a tank... which, inevitably, gets the pair into trouble. Of course, trouble is what Beavis and Butt-head exist for. Even when they finally win the game, they manage to screw it up.

But hard-core gamers won't be especially impressed by Virtual Stupidity. The puzzles to solve and objects to find have a definite B&B slant—trash cans and prisons figure prominently—but they're all pretty easy to solve. The biggest obstacle is the game's inferior, low-res graphics, inexcusable in a title optimized for Windows 95. Anyway, good luck trying, dillweed. *—Donald St. John*

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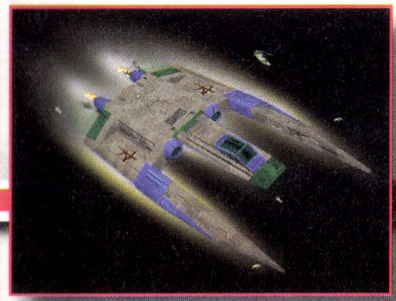
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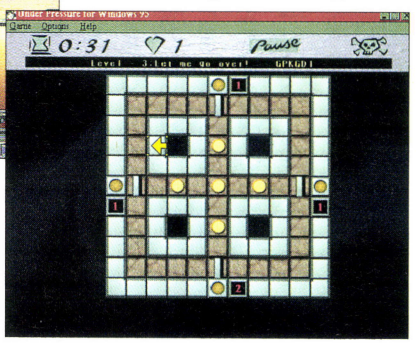
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Pressure Drop, Under Pressure



Pressure Drop combines color-matching and shooting.



Under Pressure suffers from balky controls.

Rocket Science Games, best known for big-budget action games like LoadStar, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs, and Wing Nuts, has now gotten into puzzle games with a couple of similarly titled—but quite different—entries from developer StarHill Productions.

Pressure Drop, by far the superior of the pair, resembles a cross between Tetris and Viacom Interactive's recent Zoop. As in Tetris, you must cope with objects falling from the top of the screen. Like Zoop, Pressure Drop mixes color matching and shooting. But the new game is more complicated, harder to get into, and less fun to play.

As groups of tiny colored squares drop onto the screen, you must use your Chromagun to change all the squares in each group to the same color before they hit the bar in the middle of the screen. Various power-ups and special functions spice up the action, but the squares are so small that the game becomes an exercise in squinting instead of primal reactions. The concept is sound, however, and its first-rate graphics and audio (for a puzzle game) add to the experience.

Under Pressure, on the other hand, marries a less-successful idea to twitchy controls and less-than-stellar graphics to create frustration instead of fun.

The goal of this simple game is to move a series of objects on various grids into holding tanks located around the screen. Unfortunately, extremely short time allotments make Under Pressure a click-fest, not a puzzle game, while balky mouse controls will quickly lead you to decide it's not worth it.

—Fredric Paul

Pressure Drop
Rocket Science
800-304-4263

Developer: StarHill Productions
Platform: Win 95, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

Under Pressure
Rocket Science
800-304-4263

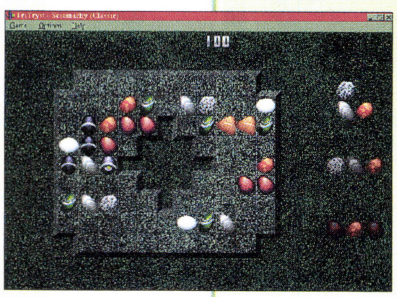
Developer: StarHill Productions
Platform: Win 95, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★
GETTING STARTED:	★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★
VALUE:	★ 1/2

TriTryst

Derivative, me-too action/puzzle games followed the release of Windows 95 like slushy puddles after a winter blizzard. Virgin Interactive's TriTryst, however, seems like a breath of spring compared to most of its competition.

The goal of this absorbing, well-rendered game is to grab, rotate, and place groups of three or more items (gems, candies, pebbles, leaves, etc.) on the board to create identical rows of three or more—which then disappear, making room for more.



Playing TriTryst is a beautiful experience.

As in Tetris, the more tiles you eliminate at one time, the more points you get, so it pays to look ahead. To help you out, the next three tile combinations are always visible on the right side of the screen. You lose when you can't put any more pieces on the board.

Classic games let you play each of the game's boards individually, while Progressive mode challenges you to clear a specified number of pieces from each board before moving on to the next.

Network support lets as many as four people play at once. All players receive the same tiles, but when one player eliminates a row, blocking tiles appear on the opponents' boards. Avid gamers can invoke the Advanced, or arcade, option, which gives you a limited amount of time to make each move. But what makes TriTryst feel like something special is its solid-looking 3-D graphics and resonant sound effects. *—Fredric Paul*

TriTryst
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

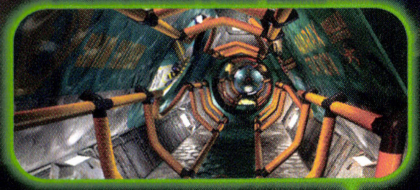
Developer: Cinematronic
Platform: Win 95, Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Requires: PC: 486/33, 8MB RAM, 1MB video card, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card (CD version requires double-speed CD-ROM drive) Mac: 68040, 8MB RAM, System 7.1
List Price: $24.95-$34.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

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Worms

Dirt-digging invertebrates, English accents, and a stockpile of weapons may seem like strange ingredients for a strategy game, but don't let that frighten you away from Worms. This oddball game of wormy warfare blends solid strategy with lots of humor and mayhem.

To win, you must guide your team of four wily wigglers in an all-out attack on the enemy worms using 19 standard weapons and tools, including grenades, homing missiles, teleporters, and pneumatic drills, plus special weapons that appear later—such as exploding sheep!

If it sounds like fun, it is. Just don't expect knock-out graphics—although the game's animated segues are excellent. Worms is strictly a 2-D game, with tiny, indistinct worms and flat, though colorful landscapes. Also, gravity doesn't apply in the worms' world: Destroy the lower half of a tree or ice wall and the top won't fall.

Don't waste time listening for stellar sound effects, either. Oh, things go "boom" and "whoosh," and your slimy cohorts will occasionally squeak out the odd Brit-tinged taunt or threat ("You'll regret that!"), but that's about all.

What Worms offers is lots of game play. You can compete in single or league matches, set up tournaments of as many as 16 teams with human or computer-controlled opponents (at the same keyboard), or drop into Sudden Death mode to put a quick end to a match. You'll find yourself spending hour after hour finding dirty ways to end your opponents' slimy lives.

—Bill Meyer



The weather outside may be frightful—but not as scary as a worm with an Uzi.

Worms
Ocean of America
408-289-1200



Developer: Team 17 Software
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 4MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Knight Moves

No, it's not that old Bob Seger hit. Knight Moves is the latest puzzle game from Spectrum HoloByte to be blessed by Tetris creator Alexey Pajitnov. Unfortunately, Pajitnov's Midas touch feels a few carats lighter this time around.

Knight Moves challenges you to guide your knight around more than 50 chessboard-like playing fields, collecting coins, swords, and power-ups such as time-stopping timers and teleporters. Simple enough, you say? Well, you can move your knight only in the traditional L-shaped pattern of a knight in a chess game. Still too easy? As you progress, the boards fill up with deadly monsters, including giant spiders and pumpkin-headed scarecrows. Okay, so that sounds like a challenge. But it's a challenge few will want to take.

The game certainly looks great, with fluid animations and colorful high-res backdrops. The soundtrack is appropriately spooky, too, although sound effects are limited.

Unfortunately, the game itself doesn't quite hit the mark. The controls, particularly the mouse, can be touchy and frustrating, causing you time and again to accidentally drop on top of a troll instead of into the safety of an open space. On top of that, the game play simply isn't varied enough to hold interest. All you do is hop, hop, hop, hop, ad infinitum, ad nauseum.

Without better controls and more to do, I wouldn't send a gamer out on a Knight like this.

—Christopher Lindquist



Watch your step, or you'll be scrap metal in no time.

Knight Moves
Spectrum HoloByte
800-695-4263



Developer: Kinesoft Software
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Win 95, local-bus Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: $25-30

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

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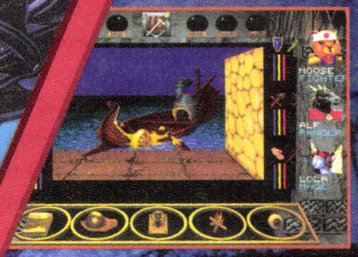
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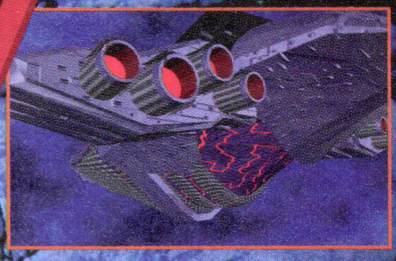
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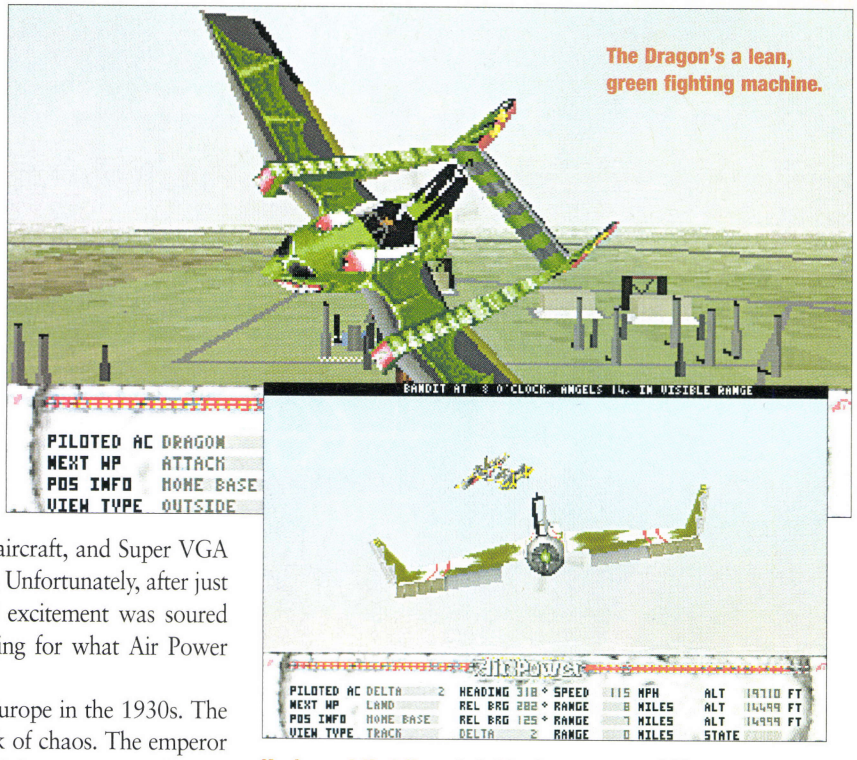
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Air Power

By Steve Klett



The Dragon's a lean, green fighting machine.

You've got that Hornet right where you want him.

I booted up Mindscape's Air Power with great anticipation. The game's cool story, clever mix of strategy and air combat, radical aircraft, and Super VGA graphics looked too good to be true. Unfortunately, after just a few hours in its skies, my initial excitement was soured by disappointment and a real longing for what Air Power might have been.

The game is set in an alternate Europe in the 1930s. The country of Karanthia is on the brink of chaos. The emperor has died, and four power-hungry dukes are vying for the throne. Vast fleets of giant airships—dirigibles—rule the skies, carrying different types of prop-driven combat aircraft.



An airship goes down in flames under your guns.

You play one of the dukes and must use your dirigible armada to gain enough resources and power to claim the throne. You win resources by taking control of as many of Karanthia's cities, towns, and provinces as you can—either by force or with diplomacy. Your First Officer, War Chief, and Diplomat advise you on the best course of action and warn you when it's time to resupply.

When you arrive at a neutral or enemy-held city and diplomacy fails—as it usually does—it's time for war. Intelligence provides vital information on your foe, and your War Chief assesses his defensive capabilities. Then you must choose which type of battle to fight, a siege or suppression—with each resulting in a different series of missions to fly, such as strikes against grain and water stores or attacks on military targets.

Air Power includes eight different aircraft, and each duke's fleet has two types—a fighter in both heavy and light configurations, and a bomber. The unusual planes resemble some of the experimental aircraft you might see at an airshow, and they perform slightly better than WWI combat aircraft. Each has its own performance characteristics, so expect to spend some time learning them all.

So far, so good—until I jumped into the cockpit.

Air Power was developed by Rowan Software—you know, the folks responsible for the mediocre WWI sim Dawn Patrol, and the equally mediocre WWII sim Operation Overlord. Each of those games spoiled a nice array of features and missions with a questionable flight model, poor sound, and extremely clumsy controls.

Unfortunately, Air Power continues this tradition. Rowan's view system is the most difficult to use and master of any flight sim I've flown. You must memorize more than a dozen keys located all over your keyboard. Some views even force you to use the Shift key. Yikes!

Sound is also abysmal. Engine noises are extremely faint—odd in an open-cockpit airplane—and when you crank up the volume to hear them better, the gunfire will deafen you. Getting the game to run in Super VGA mode is an adventure in itself—one requiring some serious system fiddling—but Air Power sure looks great and performs nicely on a Pentium 90 with 8MB RAM.

Poor artificial intelligence makes your computer-controlled wingmen virtually useless. That means you're constantly fighting swarms of enemy planes practically by yourself. Meanwhile, enemy pilots and anti-aircraft have deadly aim. You, however, are lucky if you can just keep your plane steady for a one- or two-second burst. Oh, and forget about realistic stalls or spins: You won't find any.

It's really too bad Rowan didn't take the time to address the shortcomings of its previous titles, because if it had, Air Power could have been one heck of a fun game. As things stand, it's just barely mediocre.

Air Power
Mindscape
800-234-3088



Developer: Rowan Software
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $40

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

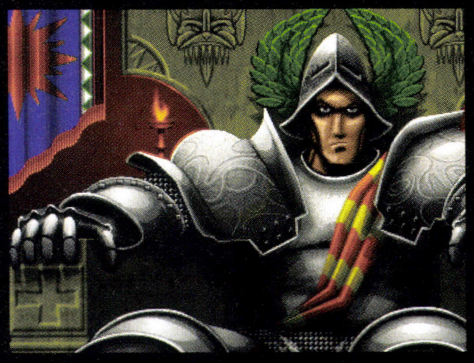
A cool story and nice blend of strategy and combat—grounded by poor game play.

TIPS



- When your plane explodes, quickly press the Ctrl key and any of keys 1 through 8 to jump to another aircraft—if any are left. If you don't make this move, the mission ends as a failure.
- The track view (F6) is the quickest way to check what's happening around you.
- Always try diplomacy first.
- The Banshee is the best beginner's fighter. It's tough as nails.
- If you're having trouble dogfighting, set your ammo to unlimited and use your rockets if you've got 'em.

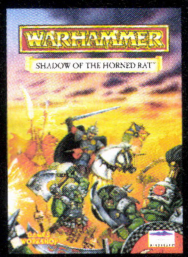






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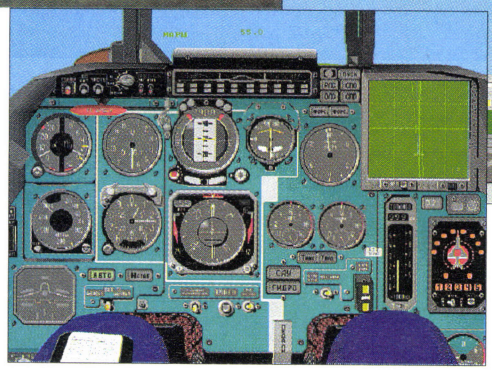
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Su-27 Flanker

By Anthony Lukban



This Russian jet relies on gauges and dials for its flight instruments, rather than digital instruments.



Command as many as five wingmen.

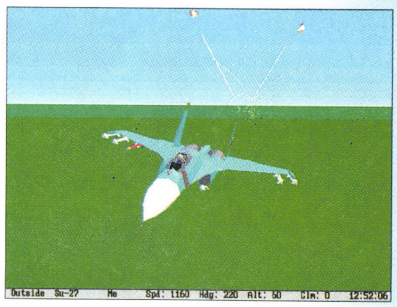
Do you love modern flight sims but tire of always flying American combat aircraft? It seems that the "Fs" (F-18, F-16, F-15) have always made up the majority of flight sims. Not any more: The long awaited Su-27 Flanker sim from SSI has arrived, and it's a gem.

The single-seat, multi-role Su-27—the "Flanker," as NATO calls it—debuted from the Soviets during the Cold War and made headlines by breaking 27 world aviation records, including an altitude record of 63,435 feet. During its heyday, the Su-27 rivaled any Western jet fighter, and it can still hold its own. The Su-27's arrival on the PC does its real-life counterpart justice in the form of an advanced and ultra-realistic flight sim.

The game takes place in the skies over Crimea, where Russia and the Ukraine are duking it out over control of the Black Sea. You get three sets of as many as nine missions that vary according to the setting you choose, from "Pilot" to "Squadron leader" to "General." In Pilot mode, you fly a single plane. Squadron missions let you control wingmen as well. In General mode, Su-27 becomes a military strategy simulation and puts you in charge of an entire campaign, commanding every aircraft on the map.

At first glance, Su-27 Flanker looks much like a Macintosh flight sim. The detail and rendering are reminiscent of such Mac classics as Parsoft's A-10 Attack! and Graphic Simulations' F/A-18-Hornet. Unlike most PC flight sims that rely heavily on texture mapping to create real-looking objects, Su-27 uses complex polygons and subtle shading to achieve its sharp appearance.

Developer Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI) also incorporated realistic movements on nearly every external aircraft part. Flaps and rudders move, an airbrake raises and lowers, external views show accurate weapon stores, the nose wheel turns while you taxi, and drogue parachutes flutter as they slow you for landing. Flight sim veterans will truly appreciate the realistic flight modeling as well.



Low-level evasive maneuvers work very well against missiles.

SSI may even have taken a small step into *overly* realistic when it came to the language used for the instruments. The Su-27 is, after all, a Russian plane, so every word in the cockpit appears in Cyrillic. Similarly, the metric system serves for all measurements, including altitude. Thankfully, the all-English manual does an excellent job deciphering the cockpit instrumentation for you.

The language barrier isn't the only hurdle you'll have to overcome, however: The sheer number of gauges and dials in the Su-27's cockpit may overwhelm even avid PC flight junkies at first. American TV-style cockpits bear little resemblance to Russian avionics, as you'll soon discover. This plane is very foreign in every way, and you really have to read the manual closely if you want to survive for long.

No doubt about it, Su-27 Flanker is the most realistic modern flight sim you can fly. However, all that realism makes it extremely challenging—maybe too challenging for many novice flyers. For others, though, Su-27 Flanker will be just the ticket, da?

Su-27 Flanker



Mindscape
800-601-7529

Developer: Strategic Simulations
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $55

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Su-27 Flanker is a must-own for serious PC flight junkies. Newbies, however, should look to earn their wings elsewhere first.

TIPS



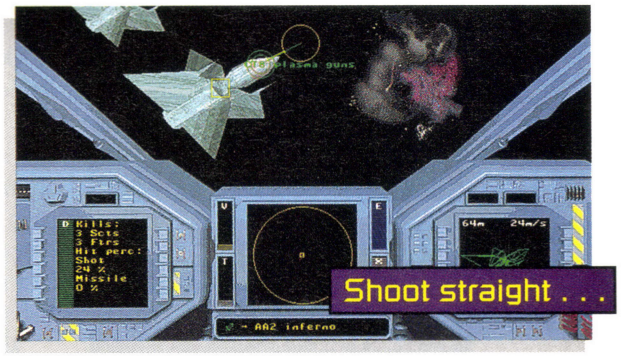
- **For best results, fly the demo missions first, then jump in to try out the different weapons. Use the training missions repeatedly to get a hang of the plane and the avionics.**
- **Enemy missile problems? Fly low—around 50 meters—then press H for horizontal trim, hit the ECM, drop chaff and flares, and watch them miss.**
- **If you don't want to black out during high G turns, fly with the external view.**

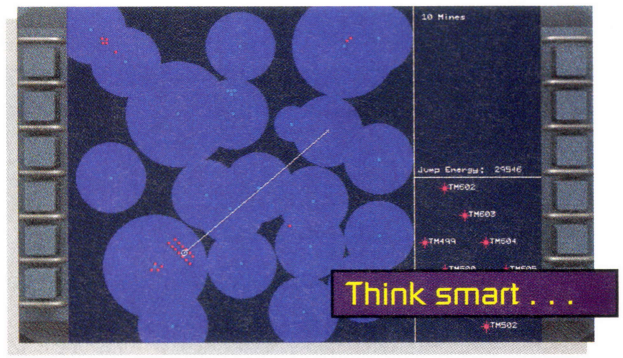
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WipeOut



After wowing critics on the PlayStation, WipeOut jumps to the PC.



Navigating twisted tracks at breakneck speeds is the name of this game.

Futuristic racers seem to be the latest must-have titles on PC game makers' product lists, and Sony Interactive becomes the latest to jump on the bandwagon with WipeOut.

Easily among the best of the first crop of games for Sony's PlayStation console system, WipeOut faces much stiffer competition on the PC, where it goes head-to-head with a long list of similar titles, such as Cyberspeed, Hi-Octane, and Zone Raiders (see review page 46). While WipeOut manages to keep up with this fast company, it doesn't accelerate as quickly here as it did on the PlayStation.

WipeOut features eight high-tech, anti-gravity racing vehicles that zoom over magnetized tracks at super-high speeds. The game's six tracks brim with jumps, drop-offs, and tight turns that would make Mario Andretti motion sick. As if the tracks aren't tough enough by themselves, the opposition also sends the odd mine, missile, or rocket your way. Each track is littered with weapons power-ups, plus speed and shield boosts that you'll need in order to survive.

You can go head-to-head against a single, computer-controlled opponent or enter a championship circuit against a field of seven other racers. You can also go at it over a network.

While the game's graphics and sounds certainly aren't bad, they're not as good as the PlayStation version. However, thanks to the PC's bevy of input options (joysticks, keyboard, steering wheels, etc.), the vehicles are quite a bit easier to control than they were with the PlayStation's gamepads.

Although there's little new here, WipeOut presents a serious, fun challenge that should satisfy your thirst for high-tech speed.

—Steve Klett

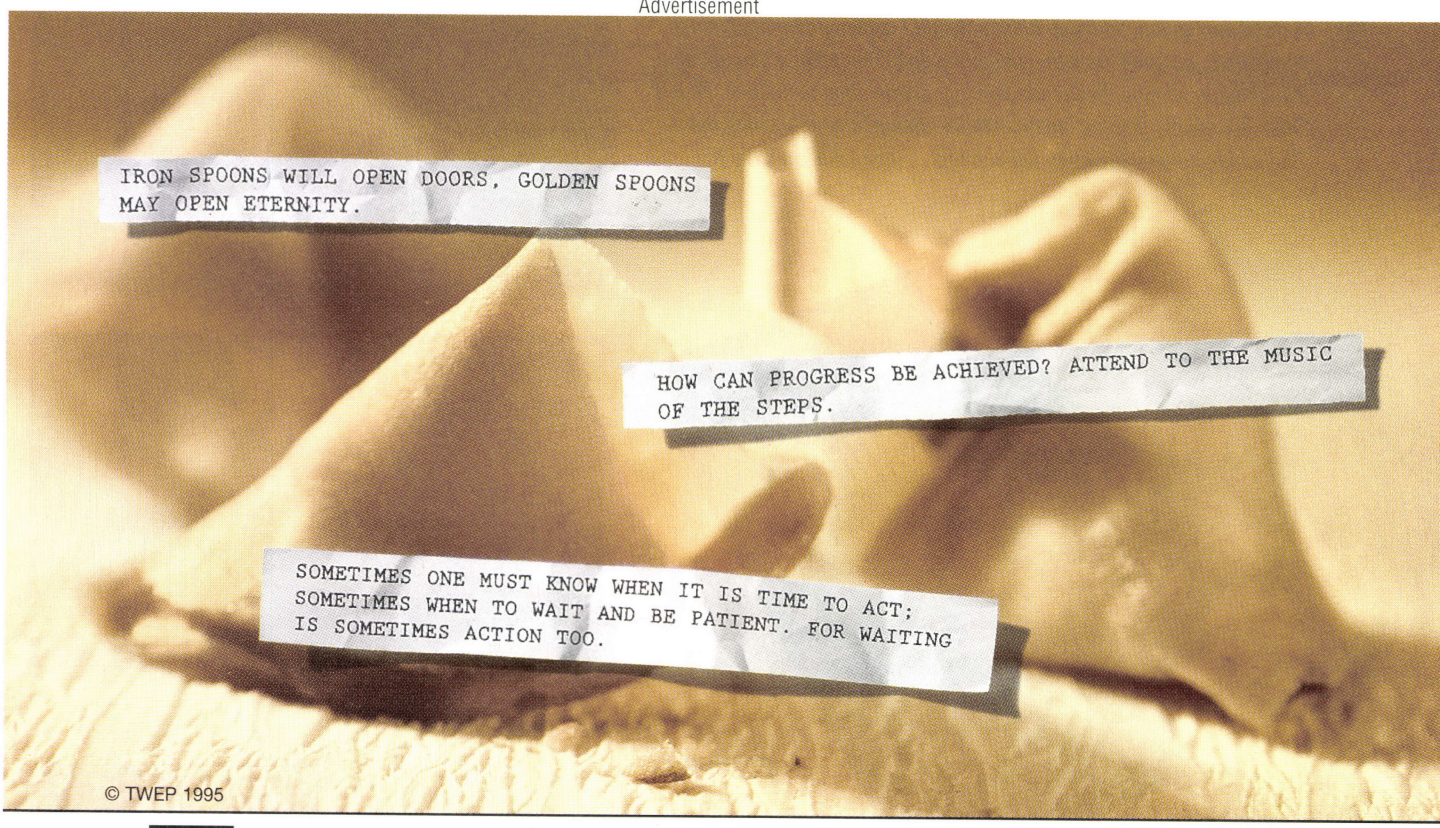
WipeOut
Sony Interactive PC Software
800-438-7794



Developer: Sony Interactive Studios Europe (formerly Psygnosis)
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

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Absolute Zero

No single person ever won a war, no matter what most space-opera games and novels would have you believe. Winning is a team effort, and Domark's Absolute Zero takes that to heart.

The story begins when a mining team burrowing into one of Jupiter's moons, Europa, accidentally awakens a long-dormant alien race. Now it's up to a bunch of regular Joes to protect the besieged miners until help can arrive.



Europa is a cold place to die in Absolute Zero.

Absolute Zero
Domark Software
800-695-4263



Developer: The Domain
Platform: DOS CD, Mac CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

During the course of the game, you must play seven different characters, both male and female. In an interesting twist, more than one character may play a critical role in a single mission. For example, one mission scenario may cast you as the bait in an ambush, while the next has you playing the role of the character springing the trap.

During the game's 30 mission scenarios, you'll get the chance to take the controls of seven vehicles, from sky bikes to gun turrets, each armed with an increasingly powerful array of weapons and defenses as your allies begin to forge swords out of plowshares—or mining lasers, as the case may be.

Fortunately, Absolute Zero has more than just an interesting premise. Detailed Super VGA graphics bring alien and human vehicles to life (although the landscapes are rather flat), excellent sound effects help set the proper mood, and well-balanced game play makes Absolute Zero a classy package. While not as involved as some space sims—you can't issue wingman commands, for example—the variety of missions and vehicles helps keep things interesting. Absolute Zero may not set a new standard for space action games, but it certainly takes a step in an unusual and intriguing direction.

—Christopher Lindquist

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Don't be fortune's fool.

It is wise to contemplate these generous words. Qin, the first Emperor of China has spoken. Return to the Middle Kingdom. Explore and discover the perilous mysteries of Qin's untouched, subterranean palace.

Match wits against this most powerful Emperor within the nebulous depths of his tomb. But take care young adventurer, mortal of mortal means, proceed with caution, and may fortune open all the doors before you.



Face it. You're gonna need all the help you can get.

Qin: Tomb of the Middle Kingdom. A thinking game by LTI.

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http://pathfinder.com/twep/products/qin

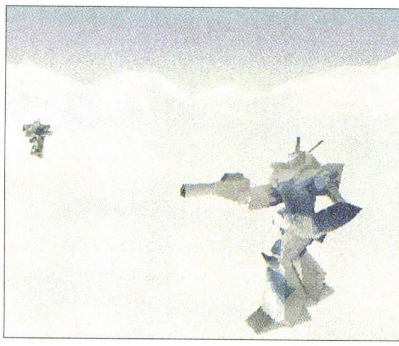
KIDS TO ADULTS AGES 6+

MechWarrior 2 Expansion Pack: Ghost Bear's Legacy

MechWarrior 2 may have lumbered onto the scene two years late, but Activision has released the first add-on disc for its stellar mechanized combat game just nine months after the original. Perhaps nine months was a bit too fast, though.

MechWarrior 2 Expansion Pack: Ghost Bear's Legacy adds a third BattleTech clan to the MechWarrior mix—Clan Ghost Bear. Like a cat waiting for the right moment to pounce, the Ghost Bear clan watched silently as the Jade Falcon and Wolf clans weakened each other in their bids to dominate their world's Inner Sphere.

But, before Ghost Bear can launch its own offensive, Mechs of unknown origin steal the genetic key to the Ghost Bear legacy. You, as a member of the clan, must find the perpetrators and recover the legacy before you can entertain any thoughts of conquest.



Clan Ghost Bear is right at home on frozen planets like this one.

Your quest encompasses twelve new missions, some of which feature awesome new terrains such as ice planets and water worlds. You get a dozen new Mechs such as the powerful Grizzly and fearsome Kodiak. New weapon systems include a much-needed anti-missile system, missile artillery, a "flamer"—an energy weapon designed to cause an enemy Mech to overheat—and torpedoes for use in an underwater mission.

But problems abound. While visually stunning, the battle beneath the sea is very, *very* difficult. Rather than choosing your own Mech, you must use a middling—and unmodifiable—machine. Plus, the torpedoes themselves aren't very effective. Clipping troubles and jittery joystick controls add to the frustration. It's dishonorable, but you may want to use the invulnerability cheat on this one (Hold down Ctrl, Alt, Shift and type "kent").

However, if you've got the patience, Ghost Bear's Legacy offers (gasp!) a complete storyline plus a new interface that lets you choose and customize your Mech without leaving the mission screen.

—Steve Klett

MechWarrior 2 Expansion Pack
Activision
800-477-3650

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: MechWarrior 2 CD-ROM, 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Black Knight: Marine Strike Fighter

Flight sim pros, stop reading now. Everyone else, listen up. FormGen has a flight sim designed to help newbies take to the air and start downing some bogies—without having to wade through a 200-page manual.

Black Knight: Marine Strike Fighter puts you—and a computerized flight instructor—at the controls of an F/A-18 Hornet. To help you get started, the vocal instructor talks you through everything from taking off to targeting to landing. Dialog boxes pop up to explain weapons systems and other cockpit controls. A status bar at the top of the screen keeps you up to date with critical information such as speed and rate of climb.

Now, don't get too excited. We're not talking the combat version of Looking Glass Software's state-of-the-art Flight Unlimited here. The sim's 50 run-of-the-mill missions won't challenge veterans. Black Knight's low-res graphics hearken back to yesteryear. The installation program is buggy (though FormGen includes instructions on how to avoid the problems). The sound could be crisper and the music less annoying (at least you can turn it off). The instructor isn't the smartest guy in the world all the time, either: I once came out of a low-level roll barely in time to touch my gear on the runway. His response? "Perfect Landing!". And the included videotape focuses on aircraft carriers and the A-6 Intruder, not the F/A-18.

Worse, the package carries a list price near $80, steeper than the plane's climb rate—although you should be able to find the game deeply discounted.

Still, if you've always wanted to try a combat flight sim, but didn't know where to start, Black Knight could be your bird.

—Christopher Lindquist



It may not look like much, but Black Knight will get you flying.

Black Knight
FormGen
800-263-2390

Developer: SE Software
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, VGA, sound card
List Price: $79.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

OWN THE SKY!

"By tapping into the talents of a skilled Russian design group, SSI may have hit the mother lode — the Mother Russia lode, that is."
— Joseph Novicki, PC Gamer Magazine

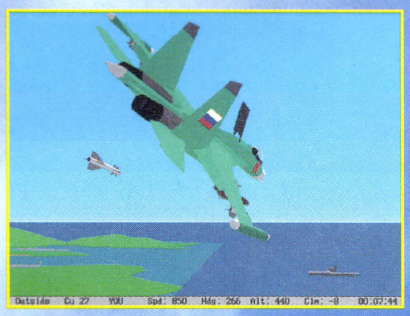
"...the most detailed flight sim we at PC POWER have ever seen." — PC Power

"It's the sim we've been dreaming of all these years... Su-27 is quite literally a dream come true." — Strategy Plus

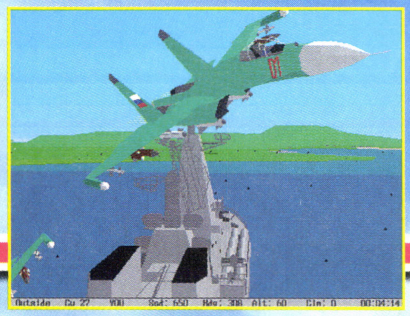
"Su-27 exhibits considerable potential to unseat Falcon 3.0 as king of the hard-core simulations." — Computer Gaming World

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Anatoly Kvotchur, Russia's top test pilot, knows the real Su-27 better than anyone in the world. His role as technical advisor ensures a simulation of the ultimate in accuracy.

To order: Visit your local software retailer or call 1-800-601-PLAY with VISA/MC (North America only).

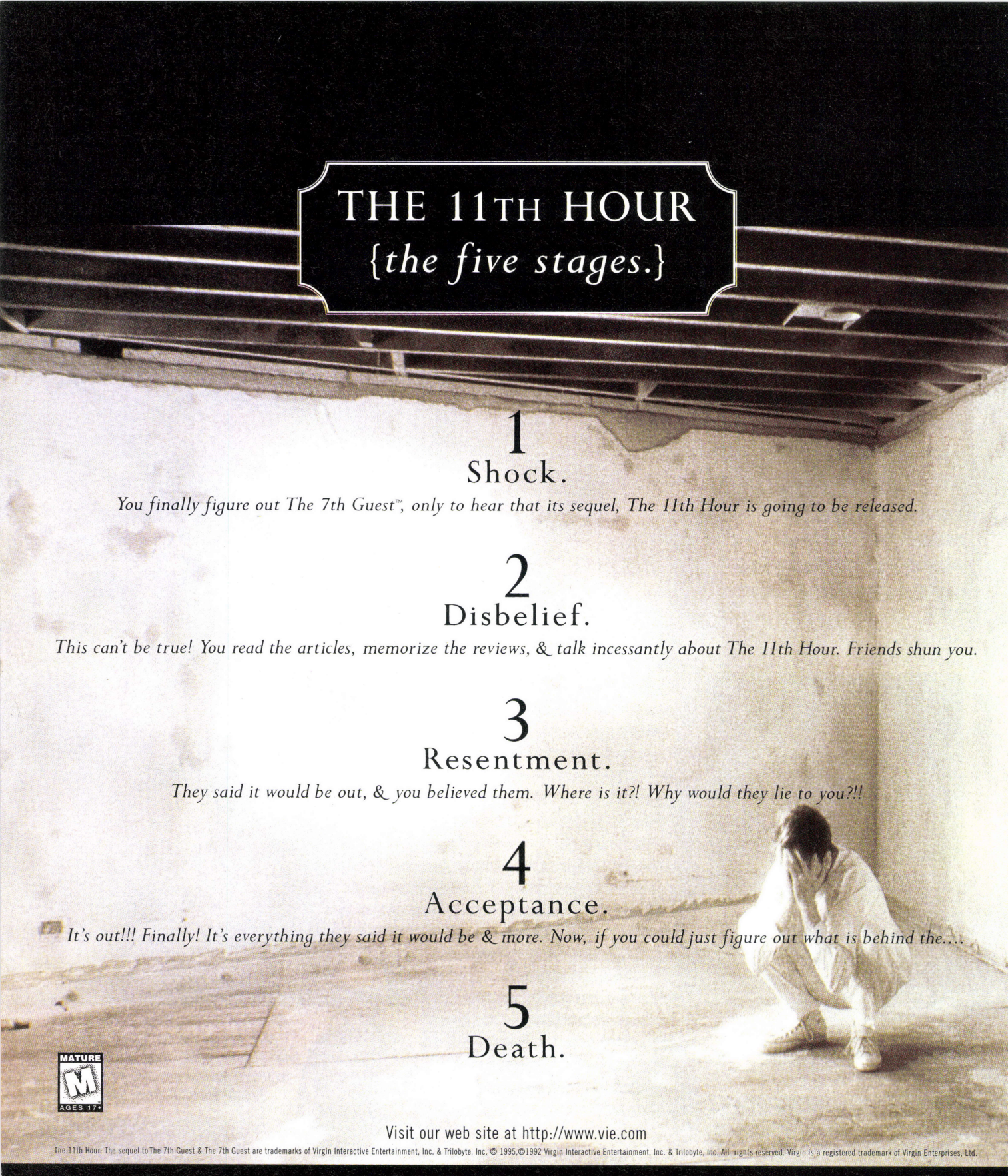
KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+

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SSI®

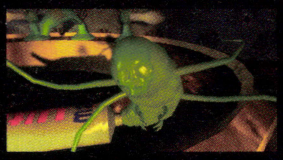
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The 3-D graphics will whiten your hair, not your teeth.



Relax, and let us draw you a nice hot bloodbath.



"Gee Wally, Mrs. Cleaver isn't so nice anymore."

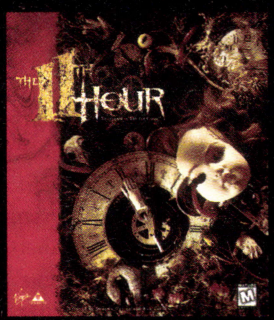


Nineteen puzzles kill precious time, as well as brain cells.

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour: The sequel to The 7th Guest™, has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and 2 CDs longer than its predecessor. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.

Virgin INTERACTIVE entertainment

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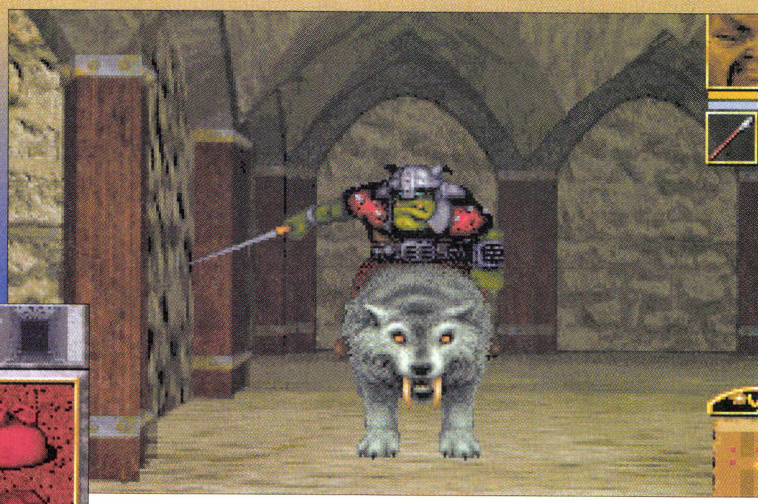
It's finally arrived.

Anvil of Dawn

By Steve Klett



The interface makes arming your character and using items a breeze.



You'll have to get up close and personal with many of Tempest's unsavory denizens.

Nobody said it was easy to create a role-playing game with the sophistication to satisfy hard-core gamers and the ease of use to please casual players. But New World Computing accepts the challenge with Anvil of Dawn, which manages to balance the needs of both audiences.

Anvil of Dawn's standard storyline goes like this: The once blissful land of Tempest has come under the wrath of dark gods hankering for supreme rule. A powerful warlord serves as champion for these malevolent deities. Who dares to accept a quest to discover the source of the Warlord's power and the means to destroy him? You, of course.

To begin, you choose to play one of five characters, ranging from a muscle-bound, thick-skulled brawler to a 90-pound weakling gifted in magic. You can accept the default settings for your character's core attributes—strength, stamina, agility, and power—or edit them to your liking.

Then it's off on an epic journey in which you do battle with scads of classic and unique fantasy beasts, such as Wyvern, Harpies, Elementals, and Colossal Baboons.

You explore dungeons from a first-person perspective, looking for keys, powerful weapons, and spells to aid your cause. Literally hundreds of items reside in the game world, many of them useful, many of them not.

Characters move a step at a time rather than free-scrolling Doom-style. And combat takes place in real time, giving you less time to plan your strategy than some RPGs. Enemy creatures aren't stupid, either: They dodge attacks by ranged weapons such as crossbows, and may even retreat to fight you again later.

Of course, using the right spell at the right time may rule out running away. Anvil uses a magic system based on the elements of fire, water, wind, and earth. Spells require varying amounts of power to cast, but your magic (and health) points replenish themselves (slooooowly), so you never truly run out. Herein lies Anvil's one major flaw: While you don't have to hunt and kill creatures or find objects to collect "mana" for spells, the game's lack of a "rest" or "sleep" feature means you spend a lot of time waiting for your health and spell points to recover.

On the positive side, Anvil's delightfully easy-to-use interface provides all the classic RPG data, including your hit-point and spell-casting levels, experience points, and even your encumbrance (how much weight you're carrying). An excellent auto-mapping utility keeps track of where you've been and lets you add your own notes.

To the right of the main playing screen lies a picture of yourself, which indicates your current condition—bloody and scarred means you're in trouble—and two smaller boxes that show the contents of your right and left hands. The interface makes it a breeze to change weapons, even in the heat of combat. Just click on the inventory icon, click on the weapon you'd like to use, and drag it to one of your hands.

All that, plus the addition of excellent voiceovers for the numerous non-player characters you encounter, cool death animations for vanquished foes, and a wide variety of creative spells to cast, make Anvil of Dawn entertaining for both casual players and serious RPG fans.

Anvil of Dawn
New World Computing
800-325-8898



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $59.99

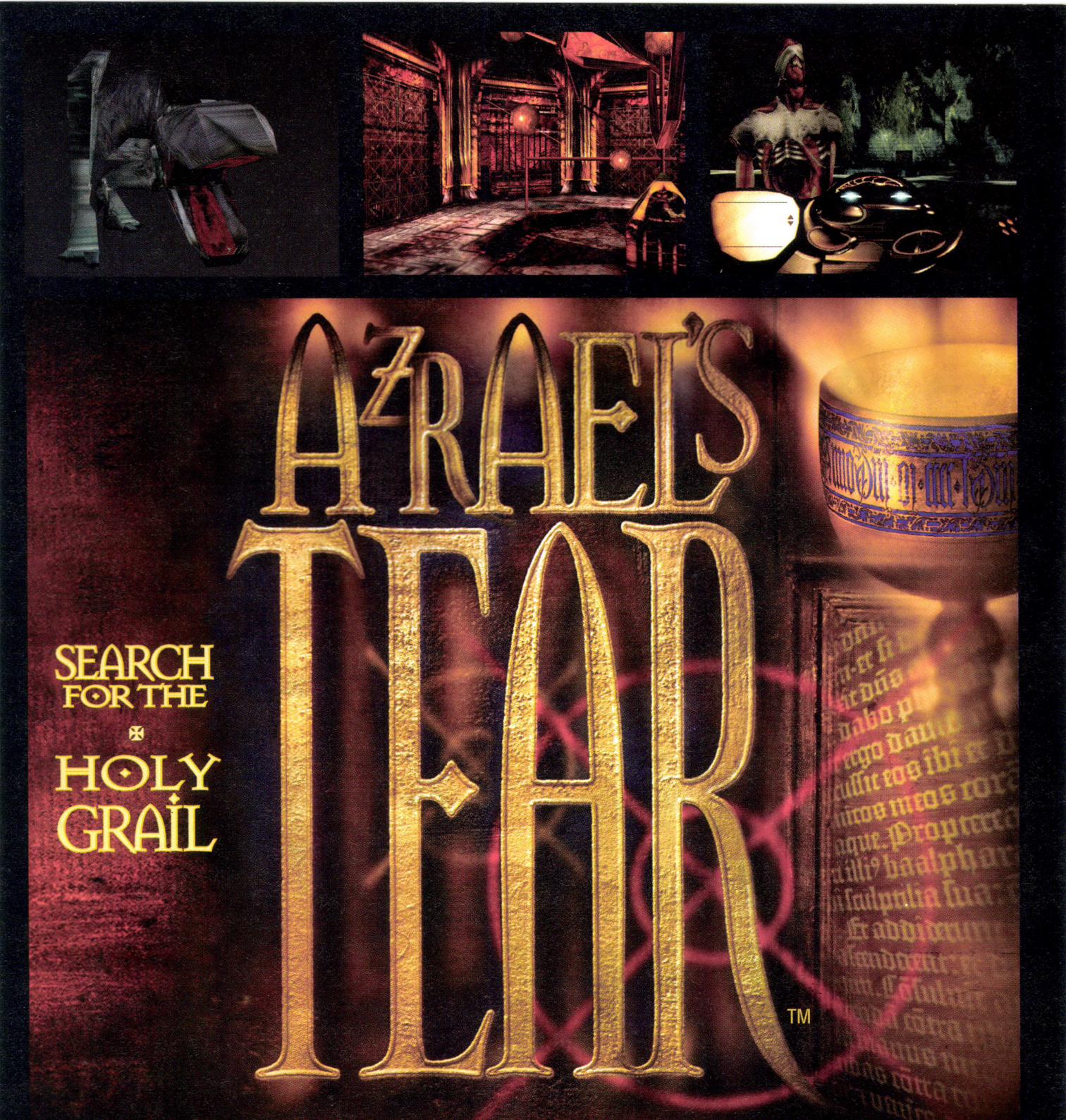
GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Anvil of Dawn's blend of simplicity and sophistication makes it a good choice for both novice and experienced RPGers.



TIPS

- **Near death and out of healing potions? Find a quiet corner to hide your character in, then go get a beverage, make a phone call, feed the cat—whatever. Time heals all wounds.**
- **Don't engage in melee combat if you don't have to; use hit-and-run tactics with ranged weapons whenever possible.**
- **If you have to fight in close quarters, don't strike blindly and continuously or you'll quickly tire. Step forward, strike, quickly step back, and repeat.**

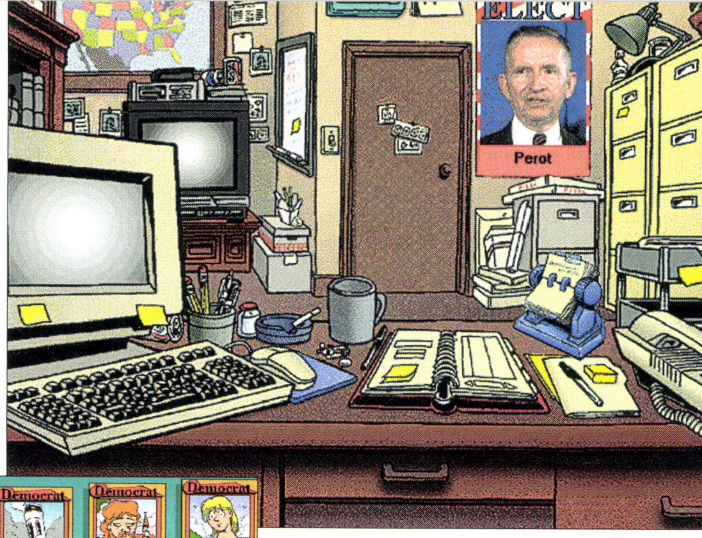


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SIMULATION

The Doonesbury Election Game: Campaign '96

By Christopher Lindquist



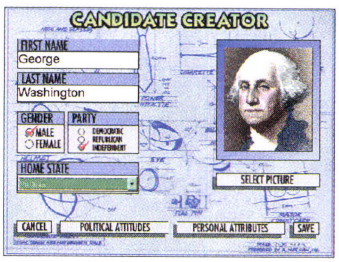
Welcome to the power center.

Anyone who thinks politics aren't funny has never read Doonesbury. Now 25 years old, the Pulitzer Prize–winning strip has long found fodder for its comic jabs in the day-to-day workings of America's government. So it's only fitting that Doonesbury creator Garry Trudeau would put his seal of approval on a game that tries to simulate that most horrifyingly humorous of all American political events—a Presidential election.



The Doonesbury folks will help you out.

The Doonesbury Election Game challenges you to become campaign manager for a Presidential candidate and guide him or her to the White House. You choose a 4-, 8-, or 12-week campaign, then pick your candidates for Prez and Veep from dozens of real-life politicians, including Clinton, Dole, and Perot. If you'd rather work for the perfect candidate, the Candidate Creator lets you tweak 11 personal and 15 political attributes to your liking. You can create a well-spoken Libertarian who's soft on crime but hard on schools, or an inexperienced GOP charmer who wants to start the cold war all over again. It's up to you.



Don't like the prefab candidates? Make up your own.

To help you out, you can hire various Doonesbury characters as Communications Director, Campaign Strategist, Spin Doctor, Financial Manager, and—if things go badly—a "Plumber" to help "fix" the other candidates in various covert ways.

You get your pick of Doonesbury stars to fill the staff positions. Mike Doonesbury himself makes a great Communications Director, but you may want to keep Duke out of the Financial Manager slot if you plan on keeping all your campaign funds. If you're a control freak, you can arrange everything from advertising to debate strategy yourself. You can also give your staffers the authority to make decisions on their own, freeing you from day-to-day tasks like scheduling meetings or buying polls.

You spend most of your time behind the "desk" at headquarters. There you'll find a computer full of info on the various candidates and managers; a map for checking out travel schedules; poll results; advertising; and an appointment book for tracking your candidates' hourly schedules.

Once you're ready to roll, click on the clock to set that day in motion. As time goes by, various bits of info—newspaper stories, poll results, notes from your staff—flash on the screen. It's up to you to jot down relevant data and use it to your advantage. For example, a poll that shows you running neck-and-neck in New York may mean you should spend some more time trying to woo those swing voters.

The Doonesbury Election Game is without a doubt fun to play and educational. The straight-from-the-strip art is enjoyable, too. But you'll also encounter some flaws. For starters, you'll need 16MB of RAM to really get good performance. Not only that, the game crashed once without warning when it couldn't find enough disk space to create the voter database, and it crashed again when trying to access some advertising info.

Even so, this election game is bound to be more fun than the real thing—and nowhere near as scary.

The Doonesbury Election Game: Campaign '96
Mindscape
800-234-3088

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486SX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, Windows-compatible sound card, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $35

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

This amusing and educational game could have used a bit more quality control.

TIPS

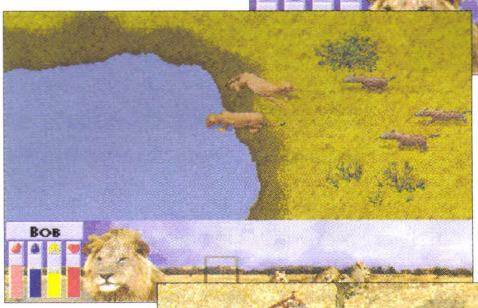
- **Don't waste time or money on smaller states contending rabidly against you. Concentrate on big states that could go either way.**
- **Looking for a real challenge? Try to win with an Independent candidate.**
- **You can turn off the animations (which quickly become annoying) from the computer screen.**
- **If you're leading in the polls, it generally doesn't pay to accept a debate.**
- **Split up your Prez and VP candidates and send them to different parts of the country. You don't gain much by keeping them together.**
- **Info going by too fast? You can slow it down from the computer screen, or simply click on an important item to keep it from disappearing.**



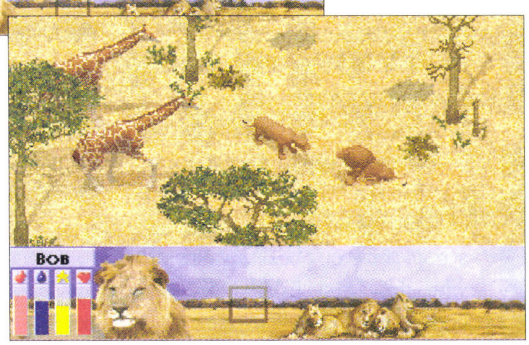
Lion

By Steve Klett

Zebras make a tasty meal, but they're tough to catch.



Water is tough to find in the Serengeti, so don't stray



Those giraffes are safe—for the moment.

Lately, I find myself ravenous at the sight of raw meat in the grocery store. I yearn to visit the zoo instead of going to work. Suddenly, the city, which used to seem so vast, feels claustrophobic. Then again, what should I expect, now that Lion has sunk its claws into me?

To do well in Sanctuary Woods' latest wildlife simulation, Lion, you have to think and act like the King of the Beasts. Lion is the second title in Sanctuary Woods' Predator Series, a follow-up to the sleeper hit Wolf (see review, January 1995, page 102), in which players tried their paws at lupine survival—a tough goal in the modern world.

Lion treads a similar path. The scene is set in the vast wilds of the African Serengeti, which makes for one huge game environment. This simulated Serengeti is 1,600 game screens across by 1,800 game screens down, so you'll spend a lot of time exploring.

You can choose to play as a renegade male lion who has little need for the company of his brethren—known as a Nomad—or as the dominant male leading a harem of lionesses, which is called a pride. If you choose the latter, you get the added benefit of being able to control each of the lions in your pride. In all, there are 20 different lions in the game, each with his or her own distinct strengths and weaknesses.

To survive, you get such lion-like attributes as a sharp nose, keen hearing, decent eyesight, and deadly cunning—not to mention powerful claws. For example, sniff the breeze and images of the different animals in your olfactory range pop up at compass points indicating the direction in which they are located. You also get the use of one important tool not at the disposal of your average big cat: a map that offers a larger view of your surroundings to ease finding essentials like water.

Unfortunately, controlling your lion isn't so easy. You use a cursor to direct the lion's movement—move it, and the lion follows—and you click on prey to bring them down, or on other lions to mate or fight. While simple in theory, the controls are somewhat awkward and difficult to manage in practice, and take some time getting used to.

Twenty preset mission scenarios teach you firsthand that being King of the Serengeti is no easy task. Missions include such daily crises as evading poachers and surviving droughts.

However, the free-form simulation is where Lion really roars. Here, you choose your cat and one of five difficulty levels—and then do your best to survive as long as you can. You'll need to track the Serengeti's seasons to know where prey will be; mate successfully so the game doesn't end with your death; and keep yourself and the lions of your pride fed, watered, rested, and free from harm. Be prepared for some idle time spent watching your lions lounge in the shade. Real lions spend up to 21 hours a day resting, and this sim is pretty heavy on realism. But hey, you'd take a lot of siestas too if you ate an average of 15 pounds of raw meat at every meal.

All in all, Lion is a worthy successor to Wolf, with sharper graphics, larger video sprites, and a cool—if repetitive—African soundtrack. So, whether you want to rule the Serengeti or just have fun learning about lions, this unique game is your best shot at being King of the Beasts.

Lion
Sanctuary Woods
800-943-3664

Developer: Manley & Associates
Platform: DOS CD, Win CD
Requires: 486DX/33; 4MB RAM (DOS), 8MB RAM (Win); DOS 5.0, Win 3.1; Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

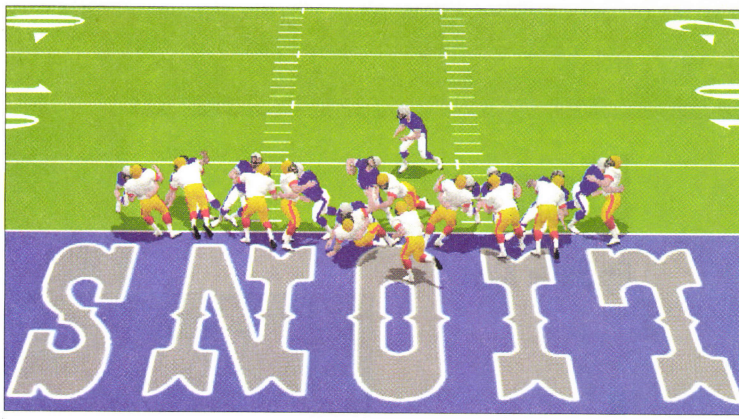
This unusual sim will make your PC roar—literally.

TIPS

- **Before playing the scenarios or free-form sim, take the multimedia Safari. Pay close attention—especially to the mating rituals—to find clues to success in the game.**
- **When stalking prey, be sure to crouch and use cover to your advantage. Also, make sure you approach your prey from downwind. Patience is key.**
- **Finding a mate can be tough. Be persistent and make sure you're at peak health.**
- **Warthogs and cows are the savannah equivalent of fast food.**
- **Female lions do best on hunts that require stealth.**

Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96

By Shane Mooney

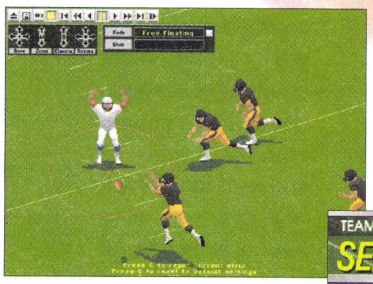


The Niners are going to make sure Emmitt Smith doesn't get his 100 yards *this* game.

Since the beginning of the decade, the Front Page Sports: Football series has garnered every major award for a football simulation. So one may wonder: What could Sierra possibly do to lead Front Page Sports: Football to a fourth virtual Super Bowl ring? Answer: not much.

For those who've come to love Football Pro '95's successful union of statistical accuracy and arcade action, you won't be disappointed with this latest incarnation, as nothing much has changed.

With CAMS (Camera Angle Management System), you can view instant replays from any angle.



Oh wait, there *is* one big difference: Them graphics.

Football Pro '96 comes to life in Super VGA, so everything looks 100 percent better, from the menus to the playing field. With previous versions, gridiron gamers were happy to get blocky players with blacked-out faces. Now, you can not only see the face guards on the helmets, but if you look closely, you can actually see some eyes.

Okay, you'll also find a couple other additions. Football Pro '96 comes set for the new season with Jacksonville and Carolina added to the NFL ranks. It even has the Raiders playing in Oakland. But the changes stop there. It's the exact same game as last year, although that's not necessarily a bad thing.

As before, you can pit your favorite team against an opponent of your choice, be he silicon- or carbon-based. You also get to decide how much control you want: Be the coach who calls all the shots, or get in there and get your cleats (or at least your joystick) dirty trying to burn Deion Sanders. You can even sit back and play the general manager, drafting new talent and dealing with player retirement.

If for some reason you aren't happy with the 10,000 plays that come with the game, you can create your own from scratch or modify existing ones with the straightforward Play Editor. Just like last year, you can change the settings (speed, strength, etc.) of each and every player to match his current real-life performance.

None of this should come as a surprise to FPS Football veterans. In fact, if you have last year's version, you can call Sierra and simply get the upgrade for a considerable savings ($34.95 vs. $59.95). Indeed, Football '96 is so similar to its predecessor that you could use your '95 manual and not miss much.

This will no doubt disappoint fans who've been looking forward to a few new features, such as adding a salary cap, allowing two players to duke it out in action mode, or—my personal wish—modem play. (You can play head-to-head in coaching mode over The ImagiNation Network or by swapping coaching "profiles" with a buddy.) Reportedly, the artificial intelligence has been tweaked, but not so that most people will notice. I sure didn't.

Football '96 remains a wonderful game—and tops in its class. But this field thrives on new features, more options, and dramatic changes. Come Super Bowl Sunday, Football Pro '96 may find that it has left the door open for the competition.



Control every aspect of your game, from the head coach to the draft picks.

BUGS

• Playing the game's intro under Windows 95 may cause your system to become unstable and crash later on. Also, crowd noise tends to cut in and out for no apparent reason on some systems. Sierra is aware of the problems and is working on fixes.

TIPS

• Tired of playing with last year's players and last year's stats? Think that Steve Young is a little overrated? You can adjust players' talents and abilities based on the latest games yourself, or check out CompuServe's Sports Simulations Forum. There, football sim fanatics tirelessly compile the latest player profiles to fit the current season. Simply download the new profiles and copy them into the FBPRO96 directory. • Before incorporating one of the included 10,000 plays into your game plan, be sure to run through it a couple of times in practice mode with your team. Some plays may consistently get a penalty such as "illegal man downfield" unless you tweak the play manually.

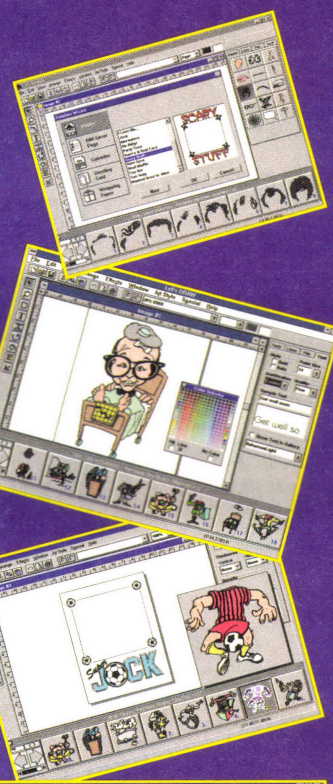
Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96
Sierra On-Line/Dynamix
800-757-7707

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, Super VGA
List Price: $59.95

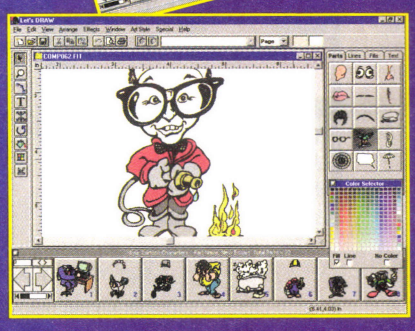
GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Despite being little more than an old friend in a new suit, it's still a great old friend.

Let's Draw™



Multimedia Drawing Program
for Windows 3.1
and Windows 95



CARICATURE EDITION

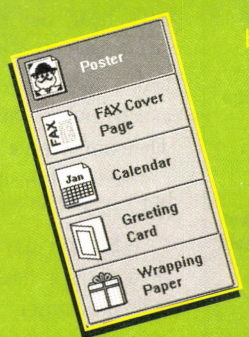
CREATE GREETING CARDS, FAX COVER SHEETS, POSTERS, CALENDARS ...AND MUCH MORE!

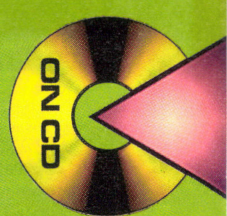
- 100 professionally designed, ready-to-use, caricatures of famous people.
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It's as plain as the nose on your face...or hers...or his...we can all draw!
But if we want to go beyond stick people and happy faces, some of us need an advantage.

Perhaps you already possess the wit of a political satirist or the humour of a comic, but your caricature skills may still be playing the catch-up game. You need to bring your zany talents to life with a powerful illustration program designed to be simple, effective and fun.

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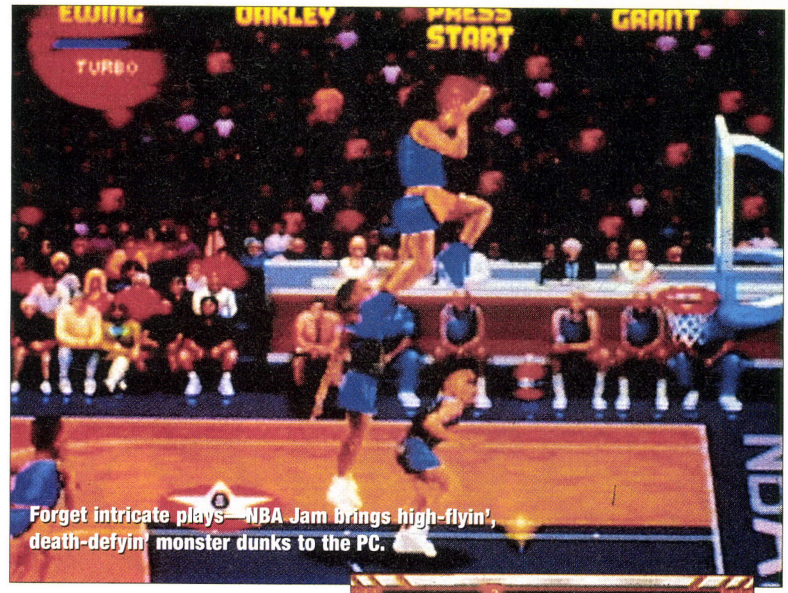
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You can write to us at 1 Woodsborough Avenue Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M6M 5A1 Comments, inquiries and suggestions are always welcome!

GAMES DOS CD • Win 95 CD

NBA Jam Tournament Edition

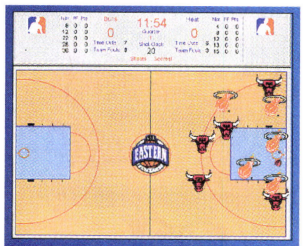
By Fredric Paul



Forget intricate plays—NBA Jam brings high-flyin', death-defyin' monster dunks to the PC.

NBA Jam may be old news for arcade and cartridge hoopsters, but Acclaim's new Tournament Edition CD-ROMs for DOS and Windows 95 look plenty fresh on the PC screen.

More than a year late to the personal computer, the 2-on-2 basketball game still isn't fully up to date, lacking the current season's trades, rookies, and expansion teams. And there are no plans to move Mourning to Miami, Rodman to Chi-town, or Coleman to Philly, much less add the Raptors and Grizzlies, who might have made good practice fodder for rookie gamers. Regardless, NBA Jam T.E. delivers the essence of the over-the-top roundball game on your computer, with no sense of lost speed or excitement.


For some reason, NBA Jam T.E. also ships with a special NBA edition of the LightsOut Sports Fans Windows screen saver.

You start by picking your two-man team, and then have to work your way up through the league's 27 teams. Beat the lowly Mavericks, and you get to challenge the mighty Timberwolves, and so on. When you finally conquer the world-champion Rockets, you get the chance to match up against superstar and other special teams.

The game's 120-plus NBA players all look great, actually resembling the real players. Many of the stars are available, but some of the biggest names—Michael Jordan and Shaquille O'Neal, for example—are missing.

An options menu lets you play straight up (with your choice of speed and difficulty), or you can choose to play with all kinds of powerups, hot spots, and juice modes—not to mention the computer assist feature, which cools off the team that's in the lead to keep the game close.



Pick your pair of players from a roster of more than 120 NBA stars.

Of course, the players perform those trademark sky-high 360-degree monster dunks that make Air Jordan look grounded.

As long as you have a game pad and a fairly speedy computer, you get the full arcade experience, which has good points and bad points. The 2-on-2 action is fast and furious, the controls simple and sure, the animation smooth and seamless, the sound effects and voice-overs superb—although somewhat limited compared to the arcade version.

But it's still NBA Jam: You can't call plays, you can't go out of bounds, there are no fouls, brutality is rewarded more than finesse, and defense consists entirely of blocks and steals. Of course, what with all the fights and trash-talking and music blaring and so on, the NBA itself seems to be trying to become more and more like NBA Jam every day.

A bigger problem for serious hoopsters, and one that carries over from the arcade and cartridge versions, is that you can see only about a third of the court at a time. If the player you're controlling isn't near the ball, you may have a hard time figuring out exactly where he is. That can cause a real problem on transition defense.

NBA Jam may not be a realistic basketball simulation, but it's sure a lot of fun.

NBA Jam Tournament Edition



Acclaim Entertainment
516-759-7800

Developer: Iguana Entertainment
Platform: DOS CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486SX/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0 or greater, 2MB to 15MB hard disk space, double-speed CD-ROM drive, 1MB Super VGA graphics card (Win 95-native version due early 1996)
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

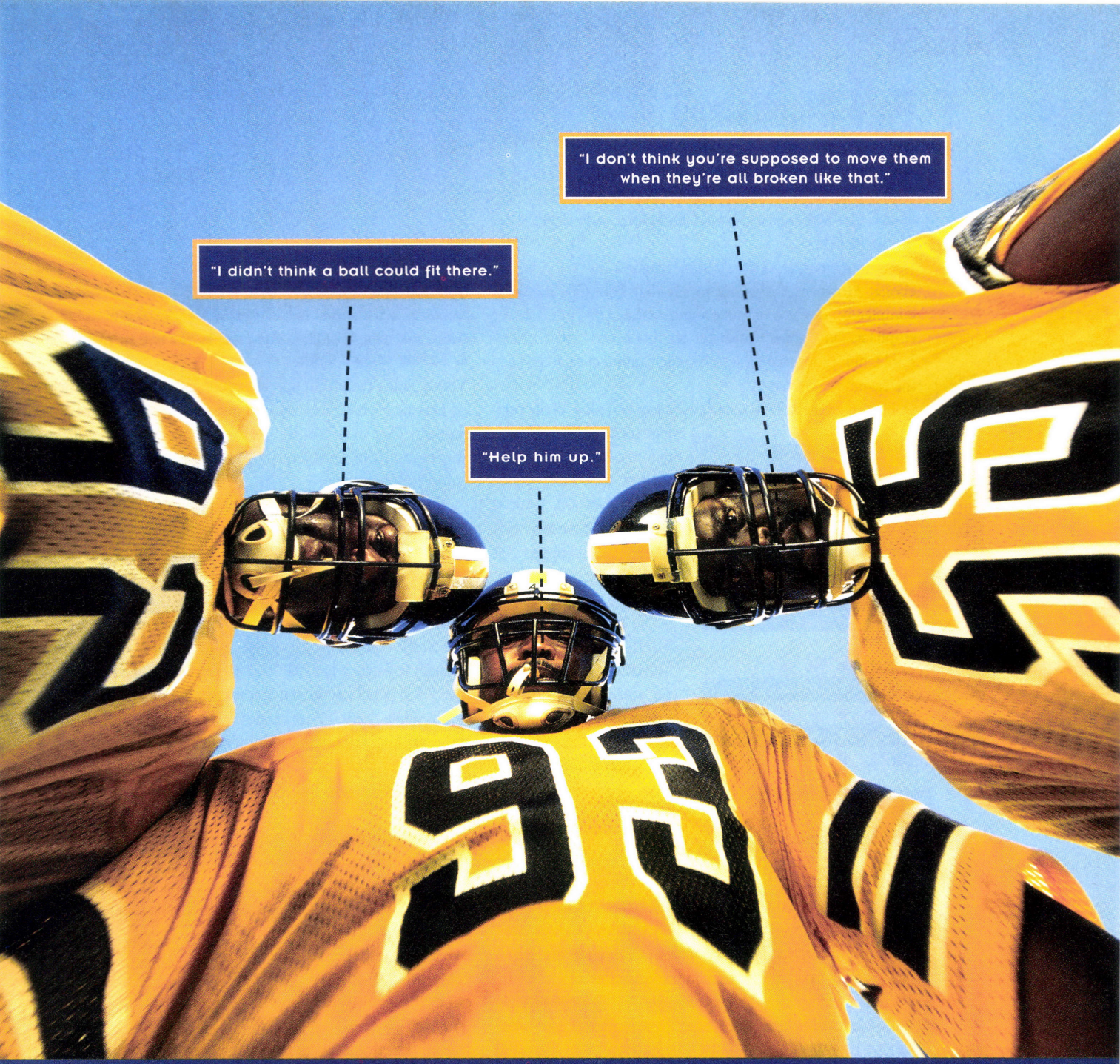
NBA Jam is far from perfect, but it's clearly the most entertaining computer-basketball game around.

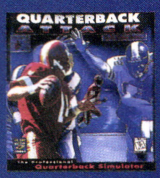
CHEATS

• These are only the beginning. Try other combinations and see what you can come up with!

Cheat	Enter at "Tonight's Matchup" screen
*Display shooting percentage:	Up, shoot, up, shoot, up, shoot
*Quick hands:	Down, turbo, down, turbo, down, turbo
*Max power:	Left, turbo, right, turbo, up, turbo
*Boost "On fire:"	Shoot, shoot, down, shoot, shoot
*Boost 3pt shooting:	Shoot, shoot, shoot, up, up, up
*Boost dunks:	Left, right, up, down, left, right
*Baby mode:	Turbo, shoot, turbo, shoot, turbo, shoot
Big-head mode:	Down, down, down, shoot, shoot, shoot
Big-body mode:	Up, up, up, turbo, shoot, up

* These cheats show up as messages on the screen.











Fast-paced, head turning action so real you can almost taste the Astroturf. Welcome to Quarterback Attack. The bone-crushing action of real football that puts you in control. Six skill levels, hundreds of plays and over a thousand ways to get your ass kicked. This is the first pro-sports simulator that puts you in the helmet of the quarterback. How long you manage to stay there is up to you.

QUARTERBACK ATTACK

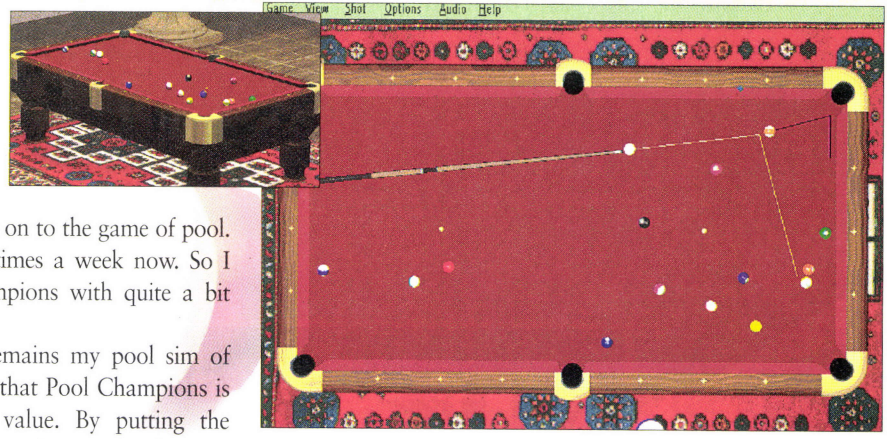
Available on MS-DOS and Windows 95 CD-ROM, Macintosh CD-ROM, Sega Saturn, 3DO.

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Pool Champions



Unlike real pool, Pool Champions makes you line up your shots by looking straight down.

Interplay's Virtual Pool turned me on to the game of pool. I even play the real thing several times a week now. So I loaded up Mindscape's Pool Champions with quite a bit of expectation.

As it turns out, Virtual Pool remains my pool sim of choice. However, this is not to say that Pool Champions is completely devoid of redeeming value. By putting the emphasis on "game" and not so much on "simulation," Pool Champions manages to be entertaining enough to keep the casual player happy.

First, the basics. Pool Champions lets you play all the popular forms of pool on a high-resolution table, including nine-ball, eight-ball, and rotation. You can practice by yourself, play against the computer, or play against a bud in "Hot-seat" mode.



Pool Champions
Mindscape
800-234-3088

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1 or 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $35

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

But the thing that makes this title different is the "Adventure" mode. Here, you attempt to go from a basement-playing novice to winning the National Pool Championship in Las Vegas. Aside from practice, practice, practice, you get there by playing friends, beating barflies, and winning a local tournament. Play well: You've got to win enough money from wagers and the tournament to afford to go to Vegas and compete for the title.

This makes Pool Champions more than a mere simulation and helps keep the game playable—if you're able to look past the heart of the game, the simply average pool simulation.

You make shots from an overhead view, which feels horribly unnatural. So the only way you can expect to hit any balls is to put on the "aiming lines," which basically show the direction the balls will take when hit. They could also be called "cheating lines," but you'll use them if you want to hit anything.

So, while Virtual Pool made me want to go out and play the real thing, Pool Champions just made me want to go play Virtual Pool.

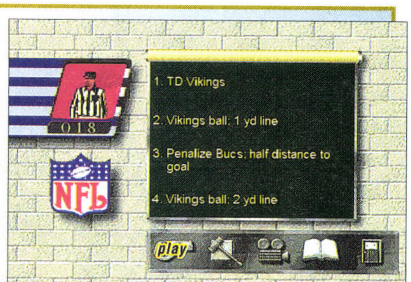
—Shane Mooney

NFL Instant Replay

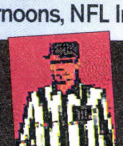
So you think you could be an NFL official, making those tough calls down on the gridiron? NFL Instant Replay challenges your football knowledge, and demonstrates that it isn't so easy to wear those zebra stripes after all.

Reminiscent of those "You Make the Call" TV commercials on Sunday afternoons, NFL Instant Replay shows you selections from more than 300 different video clips of real pro football games. Based on what you see and hear from commentator Pat Summerall, you then must choose your call from a list of four options before a 20-second timer runs out. Choose correctly, and you get points equal to the time left on the clock. Screw up, and you get a goose egg.

Your goal is to score enough points during a 16-clip "regular season" to make it through to the even tougher "play-offs." Succeed there, and you get to face the ultimate challenge of officiating a "Super Bowl."



You make the call on more than 300 plays.



NFL Instant Replay
Philips Media
800-340-7888

Developer: CapDisc
Platform: DOS CD, Sega CD
Requires: 486SX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, 256-color VGA, Windows-compatible sound card, double-speed CD-ROM drive, soundcard
List Price: $39.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

It can be a humbling experience. While the first round is generally full of easy touchbacks and encroachment penalties, things get tougher later on as complications (such as the rule changes for the final two minutes of a game) come into play. Worse, you don't really have time to think. A correct answer with only a couple seconds left on the clock is nearly as useless as a wrong answer. So you must be right *and* fast to make it to the later rounds.

The game also includes a complete online set of NFL rules to peruse (yawn), plus you can click on a button to get details on the call. The game's minimal interface and bland host won't raise any eyebrows, but they get the job done. Serious football fans may just have some fun with this one.

—Christopher Lindquist

Old Time Baseball

A strange irony plagues most baseball sims. Their developers, for the sake of authenticity, will exert serious sweat gathering players and stats, and create a number-cruncher to track all the hits, errors, wins, and losses. Unfortunately, these same developers also ignore the basic necessities for realistic play on the field. Old Time Baseball from Electronic Arts is a good example of misplaced intentions and energy.

The game features more than 12,000 players from 1881 to 1981, including every player and stat from the Negro Leagues. You can create personal baseball universes, as well as dream teams for match-ups between your favorite players across the generations: Josh Gibson faces Sandy Koufax, or the Babe at the plate against Rollie Fingers. Baseball enthusiasts should go ga-ga.

Some, unfortunately, will also cringe at the lack of realism on the field. Batters consistently beat out throws from third, even on sharp grounders. Likewise, infielders seem to commit an inordinate number of throwing errors.



Great graphics and oodles of stats, but they don't make up for poor game play.

The game's arcade play option is frustrating as well: You can't override its fielder selection, even if another player seems to be a better choice. And, back on the diamond, the fielding view doesn't change quickly enough when a ball is hit sharply down a line. Hence, the crucial part of a play can take place offscreen.

While the game allows for great flexibility, it isn't intuitive—starting a basic season requires some 20 steps. And, since the game's premise is on "old time" baseball, the absence of historic uniforms is a real blunder.

Despite the arcade option slip-ups and lack of old-time uniforms, the game's unparalleled fantasy-league capability makes it intriguing for baseball nuts. But if you really want to play on the field, take a look at Accolade's Hardball 5.

—Bill Meyer



Old Time Baseball
Electronic Arts
800-245-4525

Developer: StormFront Studios
Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, Sound Blaster-compatible, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

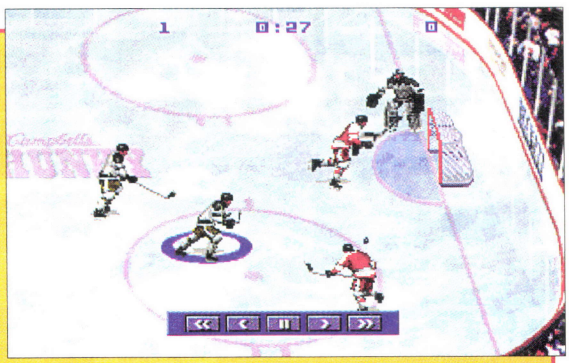
GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Wayne Gretzky And The NHLPA Allstars

It's obvious that a lot of time, effort, and cash went into making Wayne Gretzky And The NHLPA Allstars look cool. The rink, the ice, player animations, and stats screens all look fantastic. As with most sports titles endorsed by big-name players, however, it's a pity that the same care wasn't put into the game play.

The game is billed as fast-action, arcade-style hockey with all the rules, regulations, players, and statistics. Cut out the part about the rules and regulations, add the stipulation that while it has the players, it doesn't have team names, logos, or uniforms, and you're much closer to the truth.

As a hockey sim, the game sucks wind. Offsides seems to be the only penalty called reliably—forget the more complex ones like no two-line passes. To make things worse, every penalty brings up a video window of the alleged infraction. But instead of actual players, you only get to see hired goons going through the motions. Worse, a handful of clips represent every penalty. So you'll see video of your goalie tripping someone in the crease (when no one is near him in the actual game), and then your best scorer goes to the penalty box. Say again?



Hey, where's the goalie going?

Let's not even go into the fact that you can't aim your shots.

Sure, Gretzky is passable as an action-oriented (if overly easy) arcade game. It includes a three-on-three option so you can engage in a sort of NBA Jam on ice, which actually makes the game somewhat fun. If you don't care about realism in a hockey game, give it a try. If you do care, Electronic Arts' NHL '96 is light years ahead—sorry, Wayne.

—Steve Klett



Wayne Gretzky And The NHLPA Allstars
Time Warner Interactive
800-482-3766

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/50, 4MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, DOS 5.0
List Price: $59

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2



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FULL SEASON AND PLAYOFF MODES



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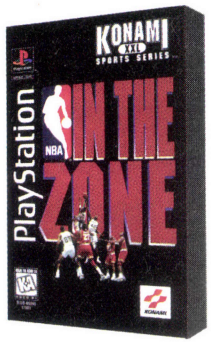


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Conqueror A.D. 1086

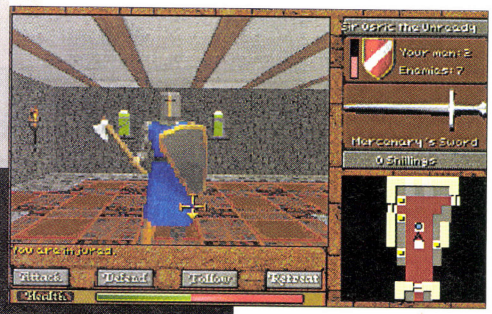
By Barry Brenesal

Congratulations! It's 1086 A.D., and you've just been dubbed a Norman knight in the empire of William the Conqueror. Unfortunately, you don't have time to celebrate your new station in life. Before a dozen years pass, you must either destroy a rampaging dragon, unseat the powerful monarch—or lose the game.

In fact, you must follow a wide variety of interesting paths to be successful in Sierra On-Line's Conqueror A.D. 1086. As Gaul was divided into three parts, so is this game: part action, part role-playing, and part medieval SimCity. Joust, melee, lay siege to castles, and fight pitched battles in the action segments. Garner hints and forge marriage alliances while role-playing. Manage personnel, construct buildings, and control production in the simulation. To win, you must perform adequately at all three.



Find out if you have the mettle to be a knight.



The graphics suffice, but they don't impress.

A lot of creative detail went into Conqueror A.D. 1086. For example, you can pursue marriage with one of six different maidens at the joust, which can lead you down different paths. One woman might offer considerable wealth if you can wrest it from her deceased husband's relatives, while another might provide excellent suggestions on scheming your way to the top.



Conqueror even throws a little SimCity into its mix.

Unfortunately, the game's realism doesn't live up to expectations. For example, when you practice the first-person jousting, a miss or a hit seems identical: your lance merely passes to the right of the shield in both cases. You'll see no evidence of impact, no waving crowds, no passing of light and shade, and no rhythm to your movement as your charger bounds forward.

Another case in point: The field battles (seen from a top-down perspective) let you direct knights, swordsmen, and halberdiers individually and in groups as they assault the enemy. That's the theory, at least. In reality, however, if you send a group to attack a single opponent, they just crowd in behind one another and never seek a route to the target. This lack of intelligence was certainly not common in medieval armies. No, the game's poor artificial intelligence is more likely to blame. Not only that, the battle animations appear crude, with swordsmen and halberdiers looking far too much alike. The economic portion of the game also suffers, thanks to terrible documentation that makes it difficult to sucessfully choose among the several dozen different buildings, citizens, and crops available.

However, Conqueror's role-playing element fails worst of all. Each nobleman you meet in the local inn, for instance, will give you one tip on a specific topic if you buy him a drink. To get additional information, merely click on him repeatedly, reintroduce yourself as if you've never met, and hope for a new tidbit. (It doesn't always work; you often get the same information.)

Conqueror's graphics consist of middling Super VGA and lower-res MCGA with many unappealing static screens interspersed throughout the game. The music, however pleasant, is totally wrong for the game's time period. It sounds more like 16th- or 17th-century Renaissance pieces instead of the 12th century's rather Arabic sounds.

Good ideas abound in Conqueror A.D. 1086, but like the frustrated knight in a celebrated Stephen Leacock tale, they ride off in all directions at once. What could have proved interesting simply does not gel. Take a pass on it.

TIPS

- If you're going to try to unseat the king, don't waste time trying to get a high honor rating.
- On the other hand, if you want to slay the dragon, high scores in honesty and piety are a must, as people will then be more likely to give you assistance.
- The included pregenerated characters have high stats and make the game easier than rolling your own.
- Purchase an army right from the start. You'll need it as soon as you leave your castle.

Conqueror A.D. 1086
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

This medieval action/economic sim/RPG wanders over the field, but never manages to dig in.

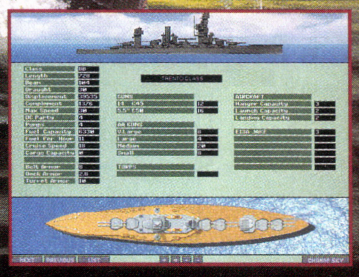
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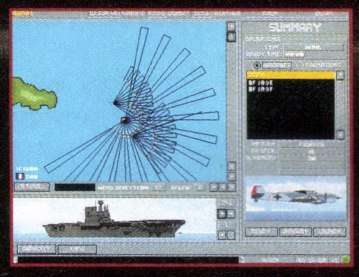
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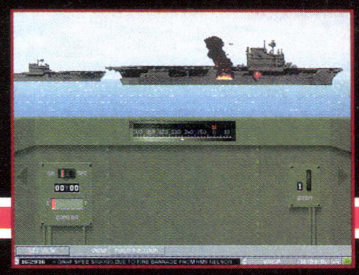
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Empire II



Empire II: Great scenario generators, mediocre wargame.

Like most computerized wargames, Empire II has two sides. The game side puts you in the trenches, hands on the trigger, eyes on the enemy. The scenario-builder side, meanwhile, gives you godlike powers to design, feed, and let loose the dogs of war.

As a wargame, Empire II comes off a bit bland. True, its scenarios feature battlegrounds from Cannae to Austerlitz and beyond; you can also play over a network or modem. But the results all appear the same, with one scenario blending invisibly into the next. The game ignores chains of command and lacks multiple attack and defense options; it's visually attractive, but it's highly simplified.

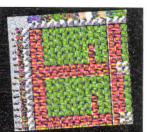
Empire II comes into its own as a powerful but easy-to-use scenario builder, however. It combines slick, Super VGA graphics, ease of use, configurability, and presents a modest but effective combination of tactical options.

You can create as many as 64 unit types per scenario, grouped into four forces of 16 each. You can determine a unit's speed on land or sea—or get more detailed and define the movement rate over any of 12 different Empire II terrains and three network overlays (roads, lakes, and rivers). Give each unit a particular weapon for zoned fire, with its own strength, range, accuracy, and depletion rate. Do you want specific units to receive a penalty or bonus for sighting one another? No problem.

Empire II does lose points, however, for smudgy icon graphics, middling artificial intelligence, and the fact that you have to load the image-editing program separately.

In short, Empire II isn't much of a wargamer's game. But if you want to design your own wargame without learning to program, the Empire awaits. *—Barry Brenesal*

Empire II
New World Computing
800-325-8898



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386, 4MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

Millennia: Altered Destinies

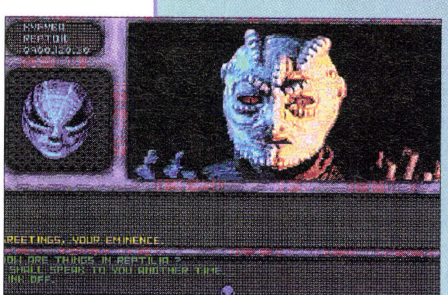
Can't change your own destiny? Then try the galactic strategy game Millennia: Altered Destinies, which gives you the chance to play God with other lives as you plot the course of four alien civilizations over thousands of years.

As the game begins, you've been plucked out of time and space by a mysterious alien and sent back 10,000 years, to a time before the predatory Microids decimated the Eschelon galaxy. It's up to you to prevent them from doing it again.

On day one, every planet in Eschelon is lifeless; history doesn't even exist. You must seed four planets with the Entomon, Reptoid, Slothoid, and Piscine races, then foster their development through time in the hope they will again expand throughout the galaxy—but with a different outcome. Unfortunately, an array of natural, environmental, political, and social crises await with every passing decade. Everything from blizzards, floods, and earthquakes to deforestation, fascism, or the invention of television can undo centuries of hard work.

It isn't a simple matter of doing what seems right at the proper time, however. Sometimes you have to do what seems wrong, such as removing useful inventions from history or selecting dictators over peaceful matriarchs. Every intervention and decision you make dramatically affects the destiny of each race and the galaxy as a whole. Getting the races to invent the wheel is difficult enough; getting them to colonize other planets and avoid the Microids is a true test in balanced planning.

Be warned that the game's memory requirements can make it a bear to install on some systems. Also, once running, it may take you a while to figure out the game's myriad controls—with little help offered by the meager play manual. Regardless, once you scratch through Millennia's surface—and get past the inconsistent graphics and marginal sound—you should be hooked. *—Bill Meyer*



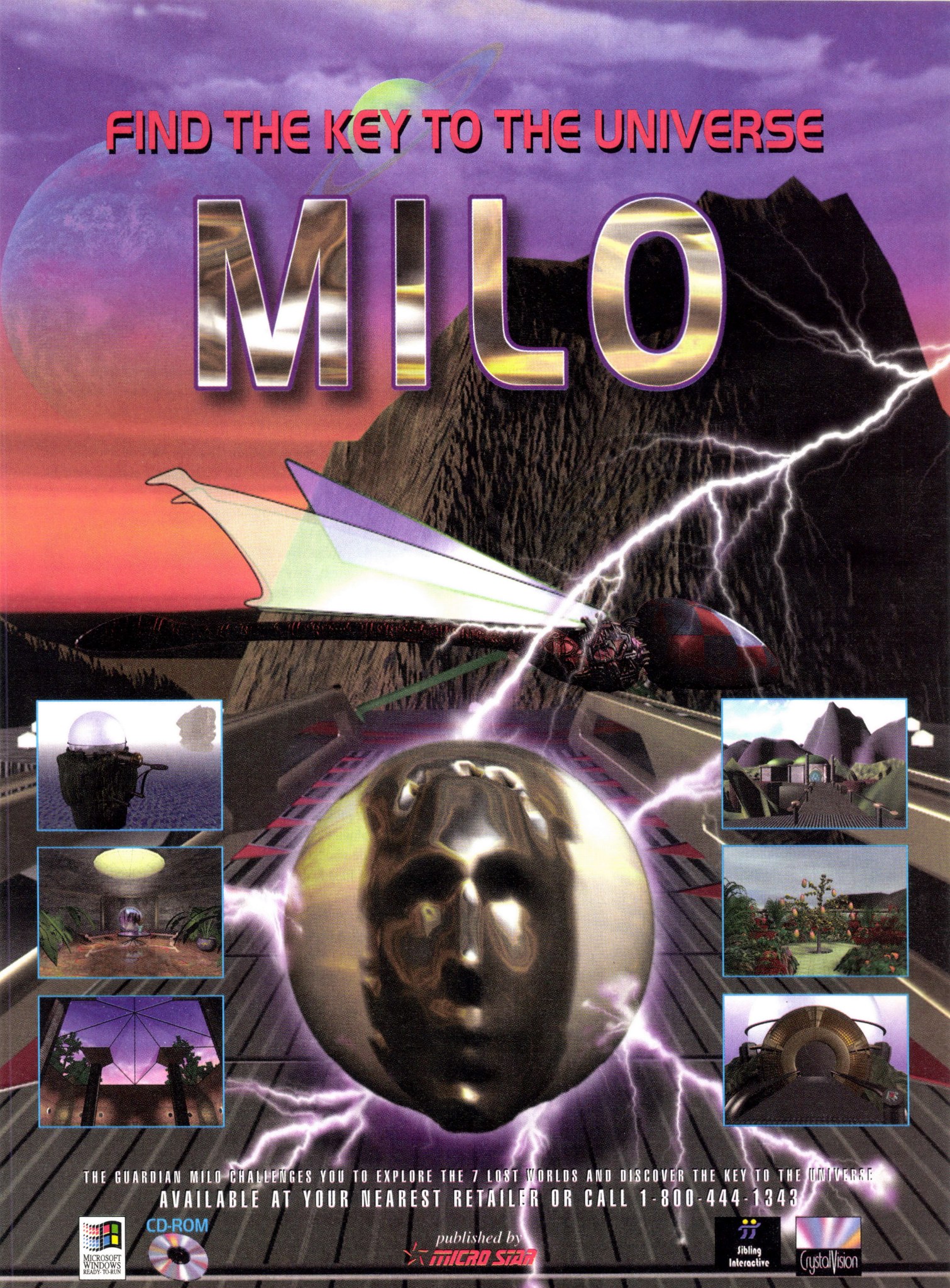
Millennia: Altered Destinies offers strategy fans a rich gaming experience.

Millennia: Altered Destinies
Take 2 Interactive
800-728-2532



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2


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Joystick Bonanza

By Steve Klett

If you've managed to pay off your holiday shopping debts, you're probably in the market for a new joystick or throttle to go with that hot flight sim that Grandma gave you.

Well, as luck would have it, you've got some hot new choices. CH Products has just shipped three new controllers, while Suncom Technologies has an ultra-realistic new high-end stick.

CH Products

F-16 Combatstick



Perhaps no joystick has enjoyed the popularity of CH Products' classic Flightstick Pro. Its four standard buttons, on-board rotary throttle, four-way hat switch, durable construction, and terrific feel have made it a perennial favorite. But with more realistic and equally functional sticks appearing all the time, the Pro was due for an update.

CH Products' F-16 Combatstick mimics an F-16 "Falcon" jet stick grip. It features the same quality construction of the Flightstick Pro, but adds another hat switch and a few extra fire buttons for a total of 14 functions. Of course, you won't get the most out of the Combatstick until software companies provide direct support for those six extra buttons. In the meantime, any games that support CH's Virtual Pilot Pro, such as MechWarrior 2 and Flight Unlimited, automatically support the new buttons. Regardless, tighter action and a modern look make the Combatstick a worthy upgrade to that ol' Flightstick Pro, especially at a street price of $69.95.

Rating: ★★★★★

F-16 Flightstick

If you can't swing the cost of the Combatstick, CH offers a dumbed-down version called the F-16 Flightstick for a street price of $39.95. You get the same sturdy construction and new look, but only four buttons (no hat switch) and a rotary throttle. The new look alone is probably not a sufficient reason to ditch your old Flightstick Pro, but it makes a quality general-purpose stick for beginners.

Rating: ★★★1/2

CH Throttle

If you want to add even more realism to your flight-sim fun, tack on the CH Throttle, which offers seven buttons, a four-way hat switch, and a two-way switch—all programmable. The throttle fits snugly in your hand, putting all the buttons within easy reach. While not as official-looking as ThrustMaster's complex F-16 TQS throttle system, the CH Throttle is extremely easy to use. At a street price of $69.95, it's also a good first throttle. Experienced PC pilots, though, may want to hold out for the 20-button CH Throttle Pro, due out this spring. (CH Products; 619-598-2518; **www.chproducts.com**)



Rating: ★★★★

Suncom Technologies

F-15E Eagle

Realism junkies will want to get their hands on Suncom Technologies' new F-15E Eagle, which accurately replicates the stick used in an actual F-15E fighter. The Eagle features four fire buttons and two four-way hat switches—each of which are programmable with as many as 20 keyboard strokes. A graphical interface makes customizing the Eagle a snap, although it may take a few tries before you can get it to work just right. Suncom also includes pre-programmed macros for 35 popular flight sims such as Electronic Arts' U.S. Navy Fighters, a copy of Domark's AV 8B Harrier Assault, and a pair of headphones. With its realistic look, quality construction, and incredible control, the Eagle is an excellent stick, even at its Pentagon-style price of $199. (Suncom Technologies; 708-647-4040; **www.suncomtech.com**)



Rating: ★★★★

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Strike Force Centauri

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Coming March 1996

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PC CD ROM

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Spotlight

Software

GIMME SOME SPACE

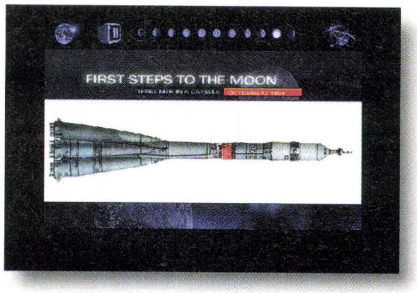
The Space Race

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

On March 18, 1965, Alexei Leonov became the first man to walk in space. Thirty years later, Leonov recalls the remarkable stroll: "It was very silent. All I could hear was my breathing and the sound of my heart beating–the Earth looked beautiful."



Leonov really took a walk on the wild side.



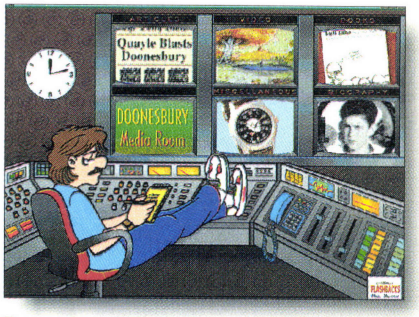
Even though you may never have the chance to follow in Leonov's footsteps, FlagTower Multimedia does its best to recreate the intensity of these moments with **The Space Race**.

The CD-ROM holds more than 30 minutes of video, 1,300 photographs, and 90 minutes of audio narration that chronicles not only Leonov's walk, but nearly every event that defined the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to conquer space. And there's more than just technical jargon and engineering specs here. Flagtower presents both country's views of the space race while highlighting the personalities, events, missions, and politics of this extraordinary period in history.

Despite its wealth of information, The Space Race is remarkably easy to use, requiring you to simply point and click on the section you'd like to explore; you can also sit back and observe a guided tour from beginning to end.

While a bit expensive, The Space Race is both a thrilling ride for space junkies as well as an excellent learning tool for those newly interested in the subject. (FlagTower Multimedia; 800-608-3524; $69.95)

–Steve Klett



Doonesbury: What a long, strange trip it's been.

COMIC COMPENDIUM

Doonesbury Flashbacks

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Is anyone else having trouble with the idea that Doonesbury has been around for 25 years? Well, the proof is in **Doonesbury Flashbacks: 25 Years of Serious Fun**, which takes you all the way back to the days when Garry Trudeau couldn't draw. You can search for strips by date, character, word, or topic; view maps with important Doonesbury locations highlighted; or play a trivia game to show off your knowledge of the strip's finer points. Also included is a timeline that provides a historical context for every one of the more than 9,000 comic strips.

If complete coverage of the Doonesbury world is this disc's virtue, buggy performance is its vice. Few searches bring up an accurate list of strips–for example, searching on Andy Lippincott brings you within two days of his death, then zips right past it to his memorial service. Political topic searches sometimes bring you the list of strips that belonged to the previous search. Other irritations include numerous typos and windows that don't scroll all the way to the bottom. Annoying, yes, but it's a small price to pay for a disc that lets you find every appearance of Santa Claus and Satan in the entire Doonesbury library. (Mindscape; 800-234-3088; street price $35)

–Margaret Lindquist

SEXUAL HEALING

Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide

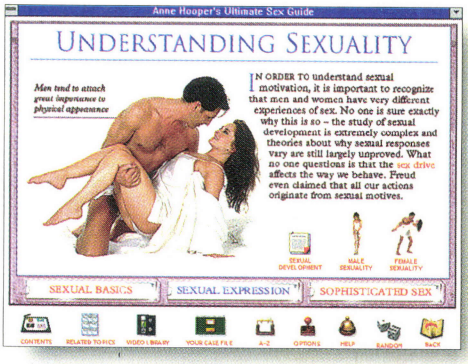
Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Ever wished your sex life was more enjoyable? Surprisingly, Anne Hooper thinks your computer can help.

As a registered sex therapist, Hooper brings 20 years of clinical experience and a respectable British accent to DK Multimedia's **Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide,** based on the book of the same name.

This helpful and reveling guide presents the delicate subject matter in a straightforward fashion that we found both professional and engaging. Our only confusion was in closing windows and returning to previous topics; windows have no close button, so you must click

continued on page 104



These kinds of lessons make for great homework.

"I just escaped two poachers, brought down a wildebeest, and kept a pack of hyenas at bay... *all before lunch!*"

Here's a game you can really sink your teeth into.

LION



You are "the King of Beasts," in this incredible wildlife simulation. Experience the thrill of the hunt! Sniff out prey. Attack the stray buffalo. Pounce on gazelles. Feast on zebras. Life is good when you're King... or is it? Poachers and predators abound. Food and water are scarce. It's 'Survival of the Fittest' in the brutal wilderness of the African Serengeti.

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Spotlight

on the underlying window to close the one on top.

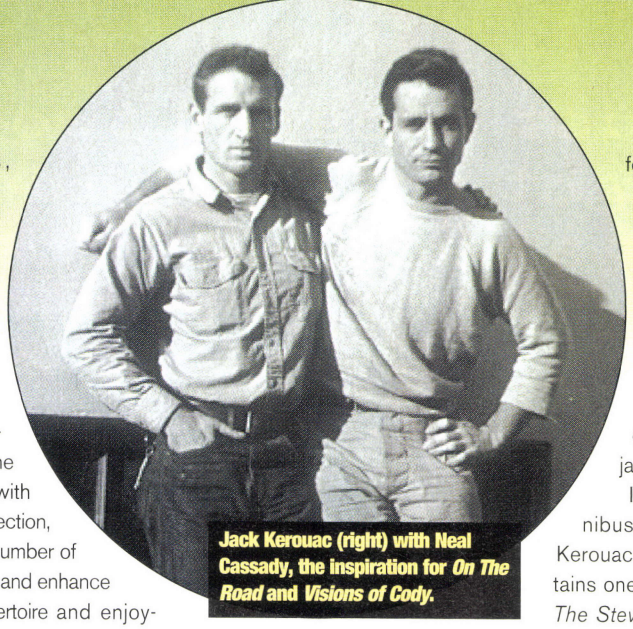
The material is divided into four sections: Questionnaires, Case Files, Programs, and the Sexopedia. Each combines text, drawings (both still and animated), explicit (but tasteful) videos, and audio recordings to address a broad range of sexual topics, from the basics to the milder side of wild. Sexually-transmitted diseases and safe sex are also covered, as is sex for the disabled.

The Questionnaires section holds six sets of questions designed to reveal the level of your sexual knowledge, confidence, sense of well-being, motivation, sensuality, and satisfaction. Hooper will evaluate your answers in each section, and offer appropriate feedback and suggest where you should look in the disc for help.

In the Case Files section, which is sub-divided into Established Couples, New Couples, and Individuals, you'll hear 35 people reveal their sexual problems and receive advice from Hooper. If the shoe fits...

Take Hooper's advice one step further with the Programs section, which offers a number of ways to expand and enhance your sexual repertoire and enjoyment. And the Sexopedia is an alphabetical listing of defined sexual terminology that is hyperlinked throughout the disc.

Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide treats one of life's great delights with the kind of respect and attention it deserves. (DK Multimedia; 800-356-6575; $39.95) *–Ann M. Marcus*



Jack Kerouac (right) with Neal Cassady, the inspiration for *On The Road* and *Visions of Cody*.

GENERATING BEAT

A Jack Kerouac ROMnibus

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Dig this crazy disc! Actually, A Jack Kerouac ROMnibus from Penguin Electronic isn't crazy at all, but it is pretty hip. It's a lengthy look at the man whose *On The Road* raised the flag for two generations of adventurous literature, even as an uninspired Kerouac slid toward an early, booze-sodden death. The disc puts Kerouac's best work in a fresh light, with audio samples, generous video commentary, and a fully annotated version of *The Dharma Bums*, the well-received follow-up to *On The Road*.

A splendid interface helps. The beautifully designed, well-indexed ROMnibus takes you easily to a Kerouac timeline; a gallery with scores of photos of all the Beat Generation figures; an ingenious family tree of essential Kerouac contemporaries (who mentored who, who romanced who, who hated who); and priceless samples of Kerouac journals and memorabilia from his estate. Video commentary from such figures as Beat poets Gary Snyder (the inspiration for *The Dharma Bums*) and Michael McClure and literary scholar Ann Charters explains Kerouac's place in the literary pantheon, and recordings from the likes of Charlie Parker and Cal Tjader establish context for Kerouac's jazz-inflected style.

If A Jack Kerouac ROMnibus lacks anything, it's Kerouac himself. The disc contains one cool video reading from *The Steve Allen Show* and some audio readings from *Visions of Cody*, *The Subterraneans*, and *San Francisco Blues*, but that's it; the bulk of the readings are handled either by McClure, Charters, or musicians David Amram and Graham Parker. Also, the disc focuses strongly on some works while virtually ignoring many others (including *Road*). Like the literary promise of Kerouac, it ends up being inspired and even quintessential, yet somehow incomplete. (Penguin Electronic; 800-253-6476; $49.95)

–Donald St. John



Fairy-tale classics get a politically correct makeover.

CLASSICS REVISITED

PC Bedtime Stories

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

"I'm not a pig. I am a cloven-footed American," remarks one of the characters in James Finn Garner's best-selling *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*. Now this hilarious set of

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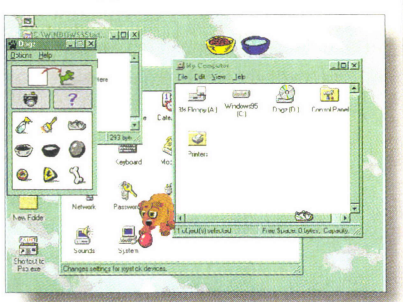


If WWII aviation is your obsession, Wings is for you.

hyper-conscientious tales is available on an interactive CD-ROM. **Politically Correct Bedtime Stories: CyberSensitivity For Our Life & Times** from Macmillan Digital USA takes the same gratuitously non-biased look at four classic fables–Goldilocks, Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, and Snow White–and translates them into excessively non-judgmental interactive skits.

No story plays the same way twice; your choices determine each outcome. The program takes turns prompting you for input and proceeding on its own. The graphics–created especially for the title–are colorful and whimsical; Goldilocks, "a melanin-impoverished young biologist," is one of our favorites. And the title takes swipes-a-plenty at popular media icons; for example, you may just hear, "They have switched our regular coffee with Folger's Crystals" popping up out of the blue.

You'll also get a politically sensitive dictionary, a screen saver, graphics for creating stationery, and a kit for subscribing to America Online in anticipation of Macmillan's upcoming AOL site. If you are feeling amusement-deficient, check out Politically Correct Bedtime Stories for a guilt-free good time. (Macmillan Digital USA; 800-428-5331; $34.95) *–Joy J. Ma*



How much is that doggy in the Windows?

AIR WARS

Wings: Midway To Hiroshima

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Discovery Channel Multimedia continues its excellent series of CD-ROMs chronicling the history of military aviation with **Wings: Midway to Hiroshima.**

The multimedia title covers the technological innovations and drama of WWII aerial warfare, starting with the United States' decisive battle against Japan for Midway Island in 1942 and running through the end of the war in 1945. An hour of video and more than 1,000 photographs bring history to life.

You can explore more than a dozen 3-D modeled aircraft, including the B-17 Flying Fortress and the Messerschmitt Bf109, and visit five virtual airfields representing the Pacific, European, North African, and Russian theaters of war. An extensive, easy-to-use database contains complete technical specifications on more than 600 different aircraft. Want to know the cruising speed of a de Haviland Mosquito at 20,000 feet? Simply enter the make and model of the aircraft in question, and presto–you have your answer: 341 mph.

Simply put, Wings: Midway to Hiroshima is a must for WWII aviation buffs. (Discovery Channel Multimedia; 800-678-3343; $49.95)*–Steve Klett*

PC POOCH

Dogz

Platform: PC, Mac
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Want a puppy, but the landlord says no? Then maybe you're the perfect candidate for **Dogz**, a virtual pet that lives in your computer.

Select your pup from five choices, then feed, groom, and play with him to your heart's content. Each cute canine barks, eats, and frolics in a window on your screen while you work, or you can take him out of his "pen" and let him roam freely on your Windows or Mac desktop. Use the water bottle to discipline him when he's bad or offer him a yummy treat to reward his new tricks.

Adorable at first, the cute factor may wear off pretty quickly, though kids may continue to find Dogz appealing. Still, for less than $20, it's one way to adopt a pet who won't ruin your carpets. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment/PFMagic; 800-874-4607; $19.95)

–Christopher Lindquist

MAGAZINE? OR GAME?

DigiZINE

Format: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

CD-ROM magazines come and go like one-hit wonders. Even as two very different pioneers–Medio Magazine and substance.digizine–go belly-up, Ahrens Interactive's new quarterly **DigiZINE** hopes to make a lasting impression with a unique mix of original video content and game-like interaction.

Clearly aimed at the 20-something alternative crowd, the premiere issue boasts 10 hours of video on such timely topics as Jesus Lizard, Nine Inch Nails, and

Advertisement



Spotlight



DigiZINE's Surf City section lists cool Web sites, but can't take you there.

other soundalike bands; Net paranoia; the history of condoms; and other assorted bits of weirdness–there are even a couple of ads. The overall mix is similar to what you'd find in its competitor Blender.

But what makes Chicago-based DigiZINE different is that there are no real menus. You navigate by exploring; doing one thing often unlocks access to others. Fortunately, you can save your progress and pick up the exploration later.

This approach breaks the mold of simply copying print magazine formats, but it also means that readers may miss some of the content. And while the approach may be innovative, the technology isn't. Video windows are small, for example, and you'll have to write down the World Wide Web addresses listed in the Surf City section–there are no Internet links. (Ahrens Interactive; 800-908-7245; information@digizine.com; $9.95 each, $19.95 for 1-year subscription of 4 issues)

–Fredric Paul

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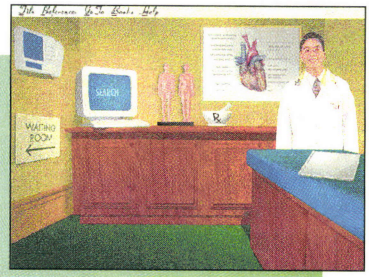


A DOCTOR IN THE DRIVE

Two Your Health

Mayo Clinic Family Health
Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★★★★

The Family Doctor
Platform: Win CD
Rating; ★★1/2



The Family Doctor is in, but don't expect a painless visit.

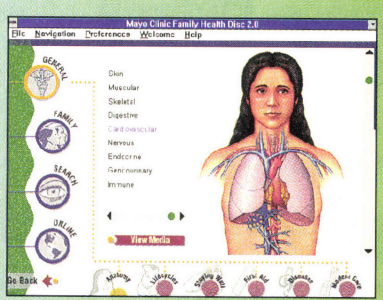
With the big changes threatening our health care system, it helps to be prepared to solve some of your family's health problems at home. Newly updated versions of two popular CD-ROM titles–IVI Publishing's **Mayo Clinic Family Health** and Creative Multimedia's **The Family Doctor: Fourth Edition**–may be just what the doctor ordered.

For a truly comprehensive health resource, explore Mayo Clinic Family Health's thousands of articles, illustrations, and videos covering anatomy, wellness, disease, prescription drugs, poisons, and first aid, among other subjects. There's also a section for entering and tracking your family's health records. Best of all, you access this wealth of information through a clean, easy-to-use interface. One minor complaint: You can't close windows by clicking on the standard square in the right-hand corner. Instead, you must click on the Close button.

The second edition of the Mayo Clinic Family Health also offers online links to the Mayo Clinic's On-Line Health Network, a World Wide Web site loaded with article updates, special events, and other health-related material. The disc even includes a copy of Netscape Navigator to get you there. Unfortunately, the program doesn't explain that to activate Navigator, you must sign up with an Internet service provider; it just gives an error message if you click on a link without being connected. Also, it doesn't give you the Web address or information for connecting if you access the Web through a commercial online service. Despite these flaws, Mayo Clinic Family Health is an excellent all-in-one health reference. (IVI Publishing; 800-432-1332; street price $55)

The same can't be said of Creative Multimedia's The Family Doctor. This title, now in its fourth edition, also has a wealth of information and some nice touches (like the Anatomy Atlases) but it isn't always easy to get to the information you want. For example, you can't return to a list of search results without redoing the whole search. Other missed details: forms for entering medical records are skimpy and text can be hard to read at times. (Creative Multimedia; 800-262-7668; $49.95)

–Christine Grech



Mayo Clinic Family Health offers a well-organized storehouse of valuable health information.

MULTIMEDIA MY DAY

Eastwood

Platform: Win 95 CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★



The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly could be a metaphor for Clint's career.

From two-bit TV star to box-office superstar, Oscar-winning director and former mayor of Carmel, Calif., Clint Eastwood seems as much icon as actor. And Starwave's comprehensive new multimedia examination of the man's life and work struggles hard to reconcile these opposing perceptions.

Filling a pair of Windows 95 CD-ROMs, Eastwood comes off as an interactive bio-pic documentary, with a bandolier full of movie clips, stills, evocative movie theme music and Clint's own recording efforts, original art, and new musings from the man himself.

An elegant interface accesses all the material via a panoramic movie lobby with posters leading to Clint's Early Years, Westerns, Cops, Man of Action, Backroads and Barrooms, and Behind the Camera. There's also a clever graphical trivia game; do well at it and gain access to special Eastwood images for customizing your Win 95 desktop.

Despite all manner of tools, navigating the title is a bit quirky. There's no Step Back button, for example. Worse, scenes change very slowly, and media clips seem to take forever to load, even with a quad-speed CD-ROM drive and 8MB of RAM (things work faster with 16MB, of course).

Mostly, the handsomely packaged (but jewel box-free) title seems to lack a sense of perspective–historical or otherwise. Even with two discs' worth of multimedia time lines, reprints of often-scathing original movie reviews, and Eastwood's own stories, you don't get a real sense of the laconic actor's inner life. And only critic Richard Schickel's six essays (written exclusively for the package's accompanying booklet) speculate on the overall impact of Eastwood's rags-to-riches career. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; street price less than $50) *–Fredric Paul*

CLASSICAL SLAM

Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★



The Great Kat does the classics: Rock and Rollover, Beethoven.

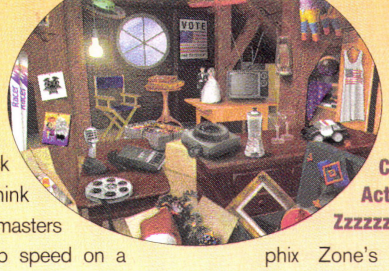
Quick! Duck! Or you may find Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed taking your head off at the neck before you even feel the wound.

Digital Beethoven is the enhanced CD brainchild of The Great Kat, a Juilliard-trained violinist turned speed-metal guitarist who's adopted a shredder's approach to Beethoven, Bach, and the like.

Kat–often decked out in pink lingerie or black vinyl–plays it fast, loud, and rowdy enough for a battalion of metalheads. She also delivers her philosophy of 21st-century classical music, takes you through the four major classical styles (with especially caustic commentary about the modernists), and quizzes your music knowledge.

While Digital Beethoven's interface is clever, the pathways aren't always well-designed. But the over-the-top wildness contains more than enough tongue-in-cheek to make this disc a fun experience. Check it out if you think you'd enjoy the masters delivered at warp speed on a Flying V guitar with a healthy dose of double-bass kick drums. (Bureau of Electronic Publishing; 800-828-4766; street price $50)

–Donald St. John



Lights! Camera! Action! Zzzzzzzzz!

AMERICA'S FUNNIEST?

Lights! Camera! Interaction!

Platform: Win CD, Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ 1/2

Wanna watch grown men get struck in the groin by small children, farm animals French-kiss their owners, and tipsy brides dance the mambo? No, don't tune to late-night cable programming. Check out Graphix Zone's and ABC's Lights! Camera! Interaction!–the first in a series of CD-ROM versions of *America's Funniest Home Videos.*

Like other Graphix Zone products, Lights! Camera! Interaction!'s interface is visually engaging, innovative, and easy-to-use. But adding interactivity to material from the boob tube doesn't always work.

Apart from random access to over 450 clips, the title's interactivity amounts to selecting a series of clips and organizing them in some story framework–from fairy tales to pickup scenes–to create your own comic bit. It's billed as a virtual laugh factory. But we all know timing is everything, and your creations will turn out only mildly amusing at best–trust us. Even if you're a nut for the TV show, you'll find this title to be a lot more icing than cake. (Graphix Zone; 800-828-3838; $39.95) *–Bill Meyer*

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Spotlight

Hardware

AND IN THIS CORNER...

Packard Bell Corner Computer

Platform: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Feeling cramped at your desk because your PC's hogging all the space? Packard Bell may have the answer to your woes.



Just the right computer for Little Jack Horner.

The **Packard Bell Corner Computer** is a top-quality system packed into a triangular case that fits nicely into tight spaces. The system comes with a 100MHz Pentium processor, 16MB of RAM, a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, a 1.6GB hard drive, a 14.4Kbps fax modem/sound card combo that features voice mail, a free PCI local-bus slot for upgrade cards, a built-in TV tuner, a wireless remote control, and a 15-inch monitor with attached powered speakers, and a software bundle that includes The Journeyman Project Turbo and Silent Steel—all for the rather steep price (by Packard Bell standards) of $3,200.

Like all Packard Bell systems, the Corner Computer's color-coded connectors make hookup a snap. However, attaching the speakers to the monitor isn't nearly so simple (it takes about 20 minutes). Once fired up, the system powered through every title we threw its way, even running some of the more finicky programs that failed on other, more expensive systems.

Despite the clever design, we found the placement of various drive bays and control buttons to be at rather odd angles, making them more difficult to access than on a standard rectangular system. We also mistook the PC's reset button for the CD-ROM door—a potentially dangerous mix-up. Finally, the interior of the Corner Computer is much harder to get at than other box designs—you must remove the monitor stand, the two front plates, and two screws before you can open the case.

Still, you can't beat the system's features (except for its 14.4Kbps modem). If you're in a tight spot and willing to pay a premium to reclaim some desk space, the Corner Computer may just be the right angle for you. (Packard Bell; 800-733-5858; $3,198 with a 15-inch monitor)

–Christopher Lindquist

THE SOUND GAME

Labtec Game Series Speakers

Platform: PC, Mac
Rating: ★ ★ 1/2

There are upgrade kits especially for gamers, and now speakers are being marketed to the same crowd: Labtec's **Game Series LCS-2612** and **LCS-2412**.

Labtec's $120 LCS-2612 three-piece subwoofer system (with 8-watt speakers and 12-watt subwoofer) features Spatializer 3-D sound technology, a bracket for mounting the speakers to your monitor, a mute button, and special bandwidth adjustment technology designed to increase the bass output to make your games go boom. The LCS-2412 has everything but Spatializer 3-D and costs $20 less.

If only these speakers sounded as good as they look.



So how do they sound? Frankly, kinda mediocre. We tested the speakers with several games including Doom, Myst, and Qwirks. While we did notice a bit more bass response than on standard speakers, the overall output was disapointing—like using toy drums instead of real ones—even with the 3-D sound button activated. In fact, switching the 3-D sound off and on seemed to have little effect.

The system cases themselves are attractively designed, especially when mounted conveniently around your monitor. But you buy speakers for how they sound, not how they look. (Labtec; 360-896-2000; $119.95)

–Ann M. Marcus

NEW TYPES OF SOUND

Keyboard Convenience

ConcertMaster
Platform: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

MaxiSound
Platform: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Your cluttered desktop got you down? Check out Maxi Switch's MaxiSound and NMB's ConcertMaster, two new multimedia keyboards that consolidate built-in sound and all the associated controls.

The MaxiSound incorporates Altec Lansing speakers, while the ConcertMaster's pair is from SRS Labs. Although both sets offer respectable sound for their size and convenience, their low wattage means they can't touch a high-performance set of sound boxes. We also encountered distortion at higher volumes, but were able to reduce it by turning down the output on the soundcard.

Head-to-head, the ConcertMaster is the clear winner, offering more features and extras, although the $130 street price is steeper. While the MaxiSound will be kinder to your wallet at $90, it features only the essentials: volume control, an internal microphone, and inputs for an external mike and headphones. The ConcertMaster includes these features plus SRS 3-D sound, inputs for an external audio device and subwoofer, a mute button, and Windows 95 keys for operating-system shortcuts.

The bottom line: If you're in the market for a new keyboard and want to conserve desk space, these multimedia keyboards are more than a mere gimmick. However, if you are happy with the keyboard you've got, but still want to save desk space, put the money toward a superior set of monitor-mountable speakers. (NMB's ConcertMaster; 800-662-8321; street price $129.95; Maxi Switch's MaxiSound; 602-746-9378; $89) ***–Bill Meyer***

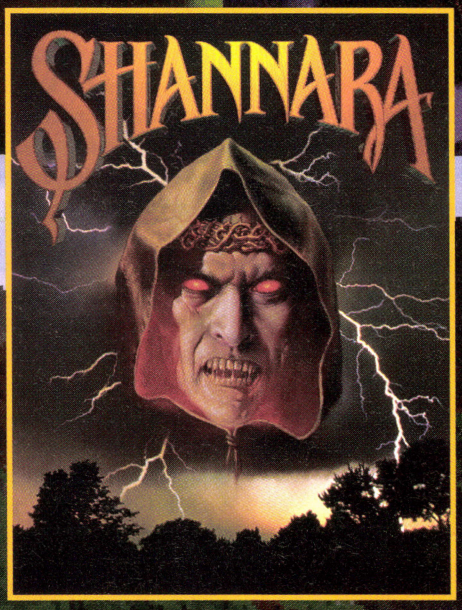




The Maxi Switch MaxiSound keyboard (above) costs less, but NMB's ConcertMaster Multimedia Keyboard gives you more bang for the buck.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WEINBERG AND CLARK

The Most Popular Fantasy Series in the World is Coming to Your PC.



A multimedia spectacular complete with sophisticated 3D modeled images, incredible animation and over 40 speaking characters.

Based on the NY Times best selling novels by Terry Brooks. FREE Shannara novel packed in every box!

Brona, the ancient Warlock King has returned! Slain decades ago by the Sword of Shannara, Brona's evil spirit now roams free as the legendary Sword lies shattered in pieces. It is your destiny to restore the ancient weapon and imprison Brona forever...but destiny has its price and it is far higher than you could ever imagine.

An original story guaranteed to thrill any adventure fan!



ACTUAL SUPER VGA & ANIMATION CLIPS SHOWN

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Spotlight

Edutainment



Danny Glover narrates How The Leopard Got His Spots.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

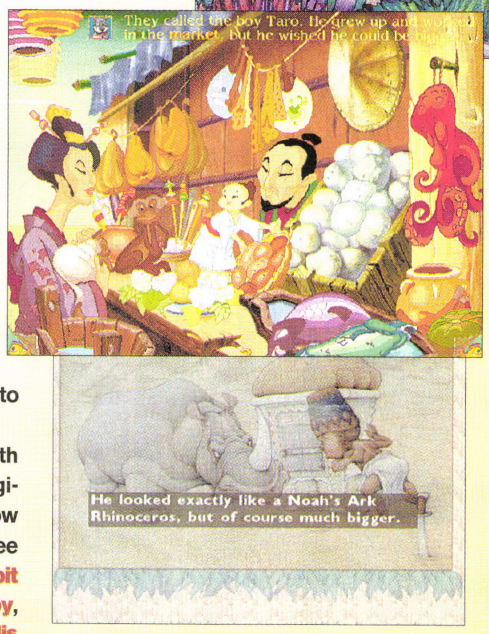
Folk Tales

Some of the newest software products for children are based on the oldest folk tales. Of course, recycling classic material for the computer is nothing new, but a trio of software companies is borrowing from other cultures to bring a little diversity to interactive storybooks.

Philips takes a shot at it with **Storybook Adventures**, originally created for CD-i and now available for the PC. The three titles in the series–**Brer Rabbit and the Wonderful Tar Baby**, **How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin**, and **Pecos Bill**–are adapted from the acclaimed Rabbit Ears series of audio books. These computer versions feature the same excellent celebrity narration and musical performances by Ry Cooder, Danny Glover, the late Raul Julia, Bobby McFerrin, Jack Nicholson, and Robin Williams, to name a few. You'll also find the same rich illustrations, but unfortunately less interactivity than the combination of the book and video- or audiotape might provide. Kids can't stop midway through the story and resume there later, for example, or jump to a particular page. Another shortcoming: The stories' texts obscure the drawings and are not highlighted as they're read.

Philips attempts to spice things up by adding some simple games, but kids will quickly become bored with the question-and-answer format. The stories are charming, but you are better off with their low-tech versions. (Philips Media; 800-340-7888; $19.99 each)

Microsoft also draws upon Rabbit Ears with its **How the Leopard Got His Spots.** The title takes Danny Glover's narration, Ladysmith Black Mambazo's evocative *a capella* singing, and Lori Lohstoeter's lush illustrations from the original work. The company attempts to dress things up for the computer with "play pages" interspersed throughout the story. On these pages, kids click around to uncover hot-spot animations. Unfortunately, these animations seem incongruous with the story's mood and elegant (yet static) drawings, such as a charming animal turning into a missile for no apparent reason.



Philips's Storybook Adventures lack interactivity.

The title's supplemental content is more sucessful: a computer version of the African counting game Mancala, a painting activity, puzzles, a music Concentration game, and a glossary, among others. Thankfully, kids can navigate to particular pages in the story, although they must sacrifice the full-screen pictures to read along with the narration. If the extras matter to you, get the CD-ROM; if not, the book/tape combination is a fine choice. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; $34.95)

Top-notch animation marks Davidson's Magic Tales.

Last, there's Davidson & Associates' **Magic Tales** series: **Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese**, a Russian folk tale; **Imo and the King**, an African folk tale; and **The Little Samurai**, a Japanese folk tale. These fully animated stories were created especially for the computer–and it shows. The rich graphics and animation will fool kids into thinking they're watching a Saturday-morning cartoon when the stories are in Read mode. In Play mode, the story stops at each screen, so that kids can uncover the multitude of clever hot spots on each page.

Music plays a big part in these titles, which boast excellent scores and delightful songs. Kids will be enchanted with all three; our favorite is The Little Samurai. (Davidson & Associates; 800-545-7677; street price $35 each)

–Christine Grech

Storybook Adventures
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★

How The Leopard Got His Spots
Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★★★

Magic Tales
Platform: Win/Win 95/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★1/2

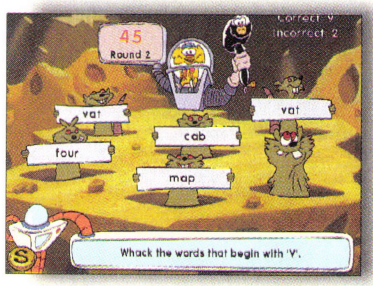
BEYOND TUNELAND

Great Word Adventure

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★★★

Little Howie, the animated host brought to life by Howie Mandel (see Star Talk, January 1995, page 18) in Tuneland, is back in 7th Level's newest kids' offering, **Little Howie's Great Word Adventure.** The title, for ages six to nine, has the same spectacular graphics and animation that made its predecessor such a standout when it was released a couple of years ago. But good looks aren't enough these days.

The title's collection of seven word games are mostly adaptations of simple game classics, such as Hangman, word search, and several arcade favorites. The game takes place inside Little Howie's house, where players progress from room to room if they earn enough points in each game. It will take kids several hours to play through; unfortunately, there's no way to save a game in progress. Kids will probably prefer to use the game's shortcut keys to jump to their favorite sections, which may well be the Whack-a-Mole and Space Invaders clones.



Classic games make up Little Howie's Great Word Adventure.

The Great Word Adventure's best feature is that you can customize the program so it will test your kids on the words you add–such as their weekly spelling lists from school. You can also choose from four levels of difficulty. Little Howie's Great Word Adventure is a visual treat, but it's too short on game ingenuity. (7th Level; 800-884-8863; $39.99) *–Christine Grech*

IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

One Small Square

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

One Small Square, based on the *Scientific American Books for Young Readers* series, introduces children ages 8 and up to the dynamic world in their own backyards by exploring a single cubic foot of soil. A three-dimensional view of the soil cube lets kids zoom in on certain ecosystems, such as fungi, burrowing creatures, and wild flowers. Click on a patch of leaves on the ground, for example, and view an illustration or video of insects busily rushing around. Kids can also get to information by way of the title's various chapter headings.



Dig up some dirt on nature.

There's also an assortment of experiments that let kids apply their newfound knowledge in real life, while the included games test what they've learned. Guide an ant through a maze, for example, by successfully avoiding predators, traps, and other dangers.

One Small Square will appeal to all kinds of kids: The squeamish can explore the grit from the safety of the computer, while more adventurous little naturalists can gear up to go outside and dig up their own soil samples. Either way, One Small Square opens up the exciting worlds that exist just underfoot. (Virgin Sound and Vision; 800-814-3530; $35) *–Joy J. Ma*

BETTER THAN PBS?

Sesame Street: Art Workshop

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

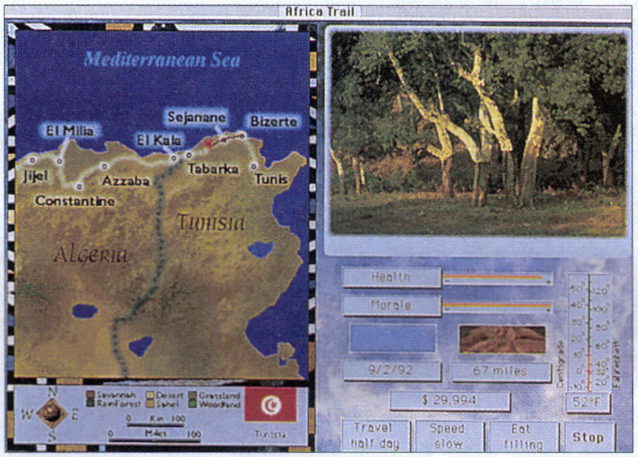
Little ones are sure to have hours of fun with Creative Wonders' Sesame Street: Art Workshop creating scenes that highlight their favorite characters.

Upon entering the workshop, kids choose from four fun-filled activities: playing with stickers, painting, dressing up, or coloring. Each activity offers several scenarios to play in. In the dress-up game, kids will get a kick out of decking out their favorite character in fun outfits. They can put the Count in a poodle skirt and pearls or accessorize Elmo with high heels and a leopard purse, for example.

The title is designed for preschoolers, and they'll have no problem getting around the workshop, thanks to the program's oversized buttons and a little audio guidance from the familiar voice of Elmo.

Your kids will enjoy producing their own special works of art, which they can save to a slide show or screen saver. Even better, they can print out these creations to use as refrigerator ornamentation, door signs, birthday cards, or even finger puppets. Who wouldn't love that? (Creative Wonders; 800-245-4525; $39.95) *–Sue J. Kim*


Preschoolers can dress up Elmo and the gang.



Lead a bike expedition along the Africa Trail.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Africa Trail

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Young teens looking for a real adventure will thrill to Africa Trail, new from MECC. This game takes players on a transcontinental mountain-biking adventure based on an actual 12,000-mile, record-setting bike trek. Players must finish their own trek on time and under budget, or they'll be sent home.

First, adventurers choose where their trek will begin and end. For each game, players have 90 days in which to complete the trip. With $10,000 to spend, they must stock up on supplies before the journey begins, but they can also purchase food at markets and restaurants along the way.

Similar to MECC's other excellent Trail releases (including The Oregon Trail and Oregon Trail II), players must make choices and overcome obstacles. To prevail, they'll need to endure blisteringly hot days, freezing nights, rough roads, flat tires, and even illness.

More than 1,000 photos from the actual expedition, along with a compelling musical score, make this game fun as well as educational. The interface is easy to use, and players pick up clues along the way that will make their journey safer and more interesting. (See our Tips box for some special help.)

In addition to learning about Africa's history, geography, and various cultures, the journal of trek leader Dan Buettner (which is included on the disc) provides insight into what the real journey was like. Players can also keep a journal of their own wild ride. (MECC; 800-685-6322, ext. 529; $48)

–Suzanne Frear

TIPS



- Don't forget to apply for your visas. Check the map to find what cities have this service available.
- Rest often. Your teammates will give you suggestions on when to rest and for how long.
- Stock up on food as often as you can. Many villages have no provisions, and there are no 7-Elevens in the middle of the Sahara.
- Save yourself some money by haggling with shopkeepers.
- Travel fast and eat light. This way, you'll have time for side trips and you won't starve if you get lost.
- Beware of short cuts; they often lead to disaster.

TECH SHOP

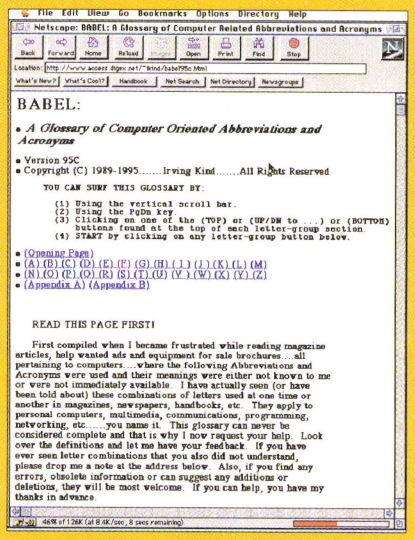
By Christopher Lindquist

A Web of Tech Support

After you've spent some time wandering around the World Wide Web, you may get the feeling that everyone out there is interested only in trying to sell you something or—worse—in boring you to death with the details of their lives, their families' lives, or even their pets' lives.

Fortunately, that isn't the case.

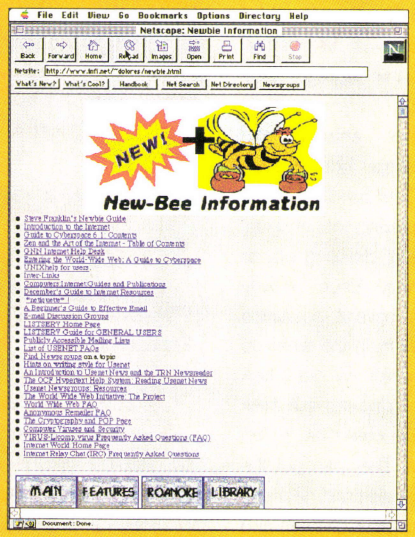
One of the best things about the Web is its intrinsic connection to the computer industry, which makes it a fantastic place to find answers to nearly all your computer-related questions. Of course, finding that useful info can mean some time-consuming searches. To help you get right to the good stuff, we've compiled a short list of our favorite sites for answers to technical queries.



BABEL

http://www.access.digex.net/~ikind/babel95c.html

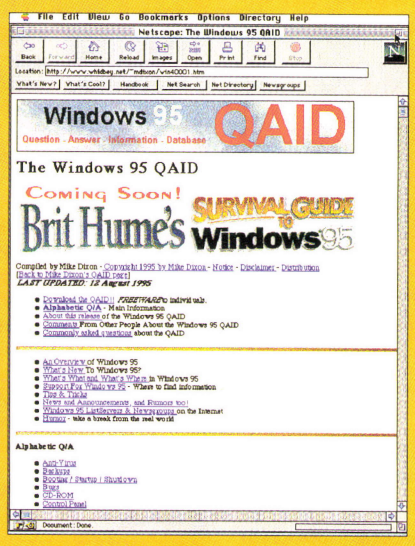
Ever read a computer magazine and found an acronym that didn't make any sense to you? BABEL can help. Just call up the page and click on the first letter of the annoying acronym. Odds are, BABEL will tell you what it stands for. You may still not know exactly what it does, but at least you'll sound more knowledgable when chatting with your techie friends.



New-Bee Information

http://www.infi.net/~dolores/newbie.html

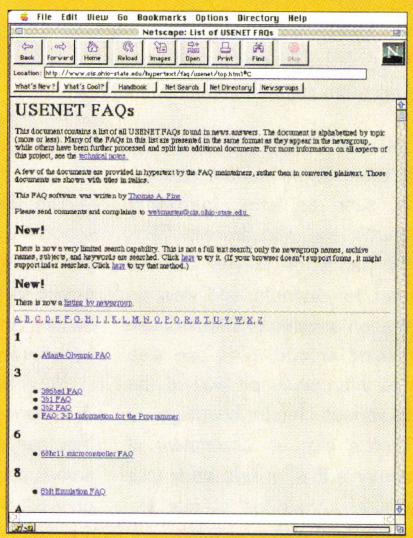
This is the perfect entry point for Internet neophytes. At New-Bee, you'll find dozens of links to Web pages that give you the lowdown on how to send e-mail, how to find Usenet newsgroups, "netiquette," computer virus protection, and just about anything else Internet-related you may want to know.



The Windows 95 QAID

http://www.whidbey.net/~mdixon/win40001.htm

If you've taken the Windows 95 plunge, you should know about this page. Mike Dixon's Windows 95 Question-Answer-Information Database is full of info about Microsoft's latest money-maker. From installation to configuration to humor, this page has it all. You can also download the database to use on your computer when you're not connected to the Web. One caveat: As of this writing, it hadn't been updated in a while. Newer info would make this site better.



Usenet FAQs List

http://www.cis.ohio-state.edu/hypertext/faq/usenet/top.html#C

It ain't pretty, but the Usenet FAQs (frequently asked questions) list at Ohio State is about as complete a set of online information as you're ever likely to see. The compendium contains not only dozens of computer-related information files, but also more general-interest stuff such as the Atlanta Olympic FAQ and a bunch of cat-related know-how compilations. If it's out there, it has a FAQ. This is where you'll find 'em.

continued on page 116



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TECH SHOP

By Christopher Lindquist

Get Those Games Going!



You finally bought that great new game, the one you've heard about from your buddies and read about in all the magazines. Now comes the fun part: trying to figure out how to get the darn thing to run.

Getting from installation to actually playing a game can be a frustrating, painful process. Fortunately, there are some basic solutions to many of the problems you may encounter.

First off, don't be afraid to read the manual that came with your game—it's not a sign of weakness. And don't forget to check for a README.TXT or similarly named file in the directory that holds the game. If those don't work, try some of these suggestions.

No Joy From Your Stick?

1) Restart your system. If you plugged in the joystick while the system was already running, it may not work properly.

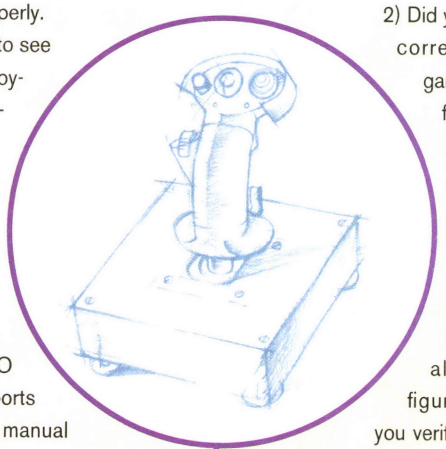
2) Check the manual to see if the game includes a joystick-configuration program. If it does, run it.

3) Make sure your system has only one active joystick port. If your sound card has a joystick port, and you installed a dedicated joystick port on a multi-I/O add-in card, the game ports will conflict. Check the manual for the card whose joystick port you are not using and find out how to disable it.

4) If you're using Windows 95, make sure you install a driver for the joystick port. If you've added the port after installing Windows 95, select "Add new hardware" from the Control Panel and install the joystick-port driver. If you are using a multiport card, you may need to get a new Windows 95 driver from the card manufacturer.

The Sound Of Silence?

1) Check all the power and cable connections to your sound card. Are the cables in the right jacks? Are the speakers switched on? Is the volume turned up? Windows 95 has a built-in volume control that may be muted. Click on the small speaker in the right-hand corner of the Task Bar to check. Some sound cards don't have hardware volume controls, requiring you to install a software control or to adjust the volume at system startup. Check your sound card's manual for details.



2) Did you configure your game correctly—or at all? Some games let you play directly from a CD-ROM without requiring you to run an installation program, but that approach may mean the sound won't work. Look for an installation program and run it. Some games also have sound-configuration utilities that let you verify that the card is working before you start playing.

Also, if you manually configured the sound settings, make certain that you did so correctly. Look at your AUTOEXEC.BAT file for the settings (usually in the form SET BLASTER=A220 I5 D1, in which A220 indicates a bus address of 220, I5 means an interrupt of 5, and D1 means a DMA channel of 1), or read your sound card's manual to find out the card's default settings.

3) Are your sound drivers installed? It's possible that when you installed the sound card, you failed to install the DOS or Windows drivers—or both. Pull out the driver disks and try reinstalling the software.

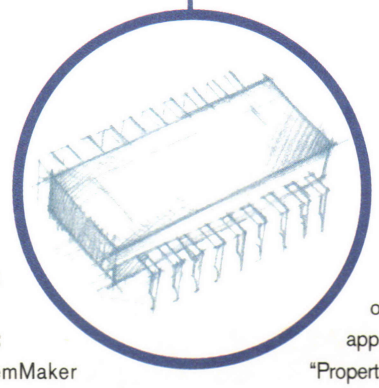
4) Sometimes sounds won't play if you don't have enough memory available. Check your game manual for details on how much memory it requires to play all sounds. If you don't think you have enough, see below for details on how to free up as much memory as possible.

Out of Memory, Out of Luck?

Before you try to solve a memory problem, you should know the basics about personal computer memory. A PC's RAM is divided into "conventional" (everything below the first 640KB), "upper" (between 640KB and 1MB), and "extended" (everything above 1MB). Extended memory can either be used just as is, or with a memory manager that can convert it into "expanded" memory.

A game may require that you have 8MB of RAM installed in your machine; however, it may also insist that you have 580KB of free conventional memory and 6MB of available

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN



expanded memory. If your machine isn't set up to meet those requirements, all the RAM in the world won't help.

Try these steps to fix an "Out of Memory" error:

For DOS games in DOS:

1) Run MS-DOS's MemMaker or a similar memory-management program. MemMaker can take common drivers for things like mice and sound cards and move them into upper memory, thus freeing up more conventional memory.

2) Eliminate SmartDrive from your configuration files. SmartDrive is a disk cache that can speed up access times for some programs, but it can also devour valuable memory. To get rid of SmartDrive, open up your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files in a text editor and type "REM" in front of any lines mentioning SMARTDRV.

3) Create a "boot disk." Many games come with utilities that will automatically create a boot disk for you. If your game doesn't, format a spare floppy by putting it in the drive and typing "format a: /s". Now, copy your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files to the disk. Use a text editor to edit both of the files (on the floppy!) to remove all but the lines needed by your game, such as drivers for the CD-ROM drive. Check the game's manual to find out exactly which lines you'll need to keep. Once done, reboot your computer with the boot disk in the A: drive.

For DOS games under Windows 95:

Windows 95 was going to solve all your memory problems, right? Wrong. Until every game and multimedia title directly supports Win 95, you still need to do some fiddling.

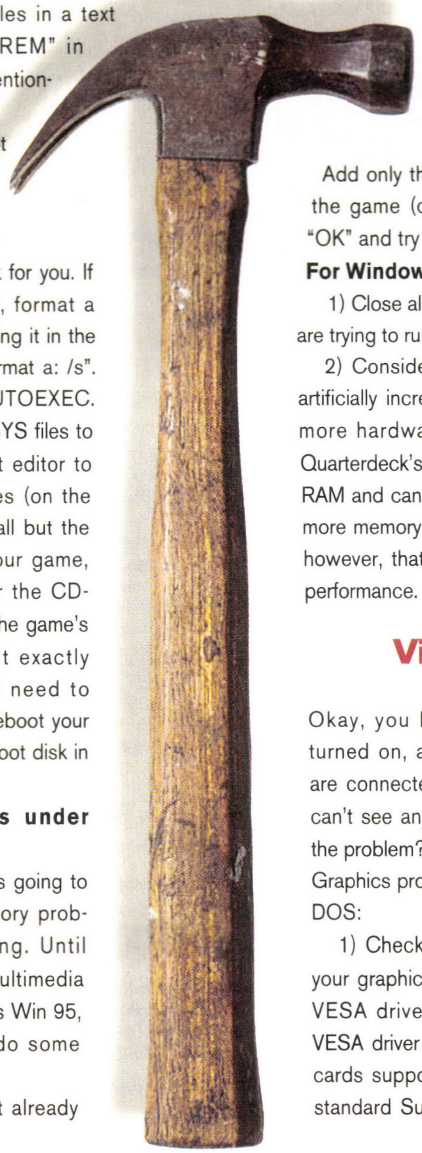
1) If you haven't already done so, drag your DOS-game program icon from the Windows Explorer onto your desktop. Right-click on the shortcut that appears, and then select "Properties." Click on the "Memory" tab and make sure that all the selections are set to "Auto." This guarantees that Windows 95 will attempt to give the program as much memory as possible.

2) If that doesn't help, open up the Properties box again, and click on the "Program" tab. Click on the "Advanced" button. Now select "MS-DOS Mode." The bottom half of the window should now be active. These boxes let you create a custom MS-DOS configuration for your game, much like a multiple configuration file would under DOS. Add only those lines that you need to run the game (check the manual), then click "OK" and try to run the game again.

For Windows and Windows 95 titles:

1) Close all programs except the game you are trying to run.

2) Consider buying a "RAM doubler" to artificially increase your RAM without buying more hardware. RAM doublers, such as Quarterdeck's MagnaRAM, compress data in RAM and can make Windows think you have more memory than you really do. Be warned, however, that RAM doublers can also slow performance.





Video Won't Go-Go?

Okay, you know the monitor is turned on, and the cables are connected, but you still can't see anything. What's the problem?

Graphics problems under DOS:

1) Check to see that your graphics card has a VESA driver installed. A VESA driver lets compatible cards support a number of standard Super VGA modes, and many games won't run without a current VESA driver. Some titles come with a "universal" driver that may work with your card, while others require you to contact the card maker to get the right driver.

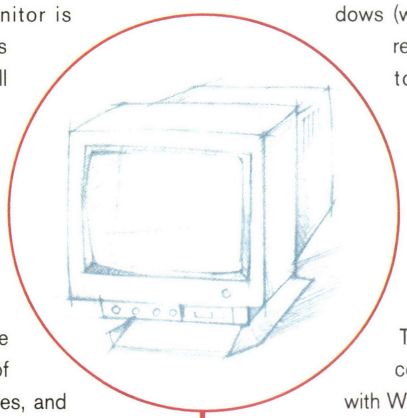
2) Check to see if your graphics card supports the video modes required by the game. Some older cards may not support the resolutions or color depths that are needed by today's games, such as 640-by-480 resolution with 16 million colors.

3) Some games are incompatible–or barely compatible–with some graphics cards. Check the README.TXT file or call the game maker for a list of known problem cards.

Graphics problems under Windows and Windows 95:

1) Graphics don't look great? Maybe the game wants more colors or a higher resolution. Check your manual. In Windows 95, you can adjust both from the Display icon in the Control Panel. Under Windows 3.1, you must use a utility supplied with your graphics card. Again, check the manual for details on using the utility.

2) No full-motion video? Did you install Video for Windows or QuickTime for Windows (whichever the product requires)? If not, check to see if the game comes with a runtime version that you can install. Also, make sure that you have the most current version of Video for Windows or QuickTime to guarantee compatibility, especially with Windows 95. ■



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Empty your shoes ...



A-10 Attack!

Best Flight Simulator of 1995

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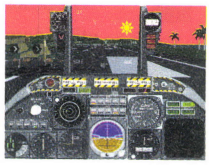


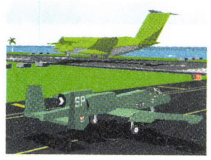
A-10 Cuba!

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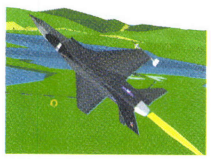
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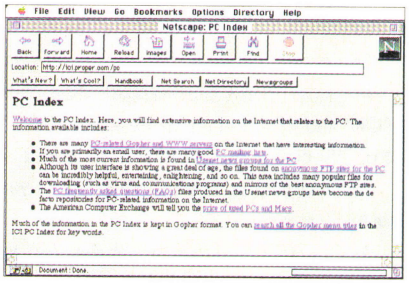
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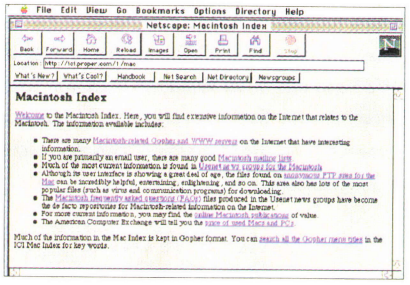


Apple Computer

http://www.apple.com

Want the best Mac info? Go straight to the core—Apple Computer's Web site. From here, you can access tons of info on Apple products, look up the latest on new Mac technology, or find links to unofficial outside sites of interest to Mac users.





Mac and PC Indices

http://ici.proper.com/pc; http://ici.proper.com/1/mac

Like the FAQs screens, these index pages sure won't win any beauty contests. However, it's function, not form, that's most important here. These Mac and PC indices can take you to dozens of other Web sites containing all kinds of useful information about hardware and software. There's even a link to a site where you can find out just how much that old computer is worth on the open market. ■

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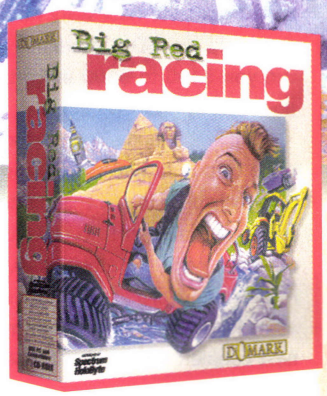
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To ISDN, or Not to ISDN?

I've seen a lot of magazines talking about ISDN and how fast it is. I spend a lot of time on the Web and would love better performance, but I don't know if ISDN is really worthwhile. How much does it cost? Would I be better off getting a 28.8Kbps modem instead?
William Schafer
Address not available

Without a doubt, ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) is faster than the fastest of today's modems—as much as four or five times faster. However, all that speed comes at a price, or should I say several prices?

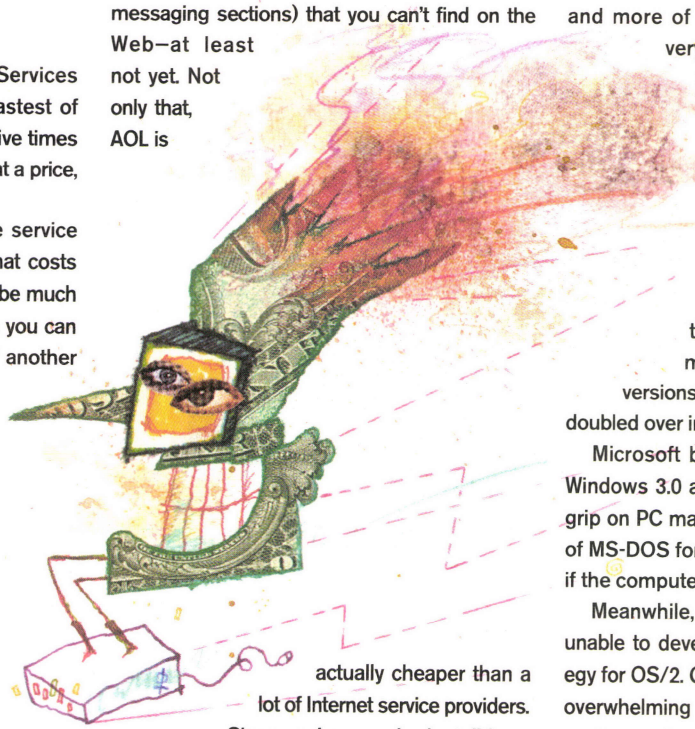
First, you'll have to pay to get the service installed. In my neck of the woods, that costs about $35, but your costs could easily be much higher—if ISDN is available at all. Then you can expect to pay a monthly premium of another $25 or more—possibly a lot more. The generally higher prices charged by Internet service providers with ISDN access will add another $200 to $700 per year. Not only that, depending on your computer and how fancy you want to get, the necessary hardware (basically, an ISDN "modem") could run you $100 to $500 more than a good-quality 28.8Kbps modem.

If all that sounds like a reasonable price to pay to get the extra speed, plus the ability to still make phone calls while you're online, then take the plunge. However, for most people, getting a 28.8 or 33.6Kbps modem and crossing your fingers for the arrival of even faster cable modems in the next couple of years is probably a more cost-effective solution.

The Way to the Web

My family just purchased a new Packard Bell 812CD with the "Internet Setup" icon pre-installed on my Windows 95 desktop. I already have an existing account with America Online—and I have a small budget. Should I continue with AOL, or say "to heck with it" and go with the direct Internet services? Where will I get the most value for my money?
Zach Klein
Fort Wayne, IN

The Web is wide. The Web is deep. But the Web is also confusing. AOL is a lot easier to navigate and also includes hundreds of exclusive services (including dozens of game tech support and messaging sections) that you can't find on the Web—at least not yet. Not only that, AOL is actually cheaper than a lot of Internet service providers.



Since you're on a budget, I'd say stick with AOL for now and take advantage of its integrated Web access. If you find yourself spending most of your time on the Web and want to drop AOL entirely, you can always make the switch later.

Whither OS/2?

One of my friends keeps telling me that OS/2 Warp is a much better operating system than either DOS or Windows 95. He says it's faster, easier to use, and tougher to crash. If it's really better, then why don't I see any games for OS/2 anywhere?
Stephen Horowitz
New York, NY

Long ago, great big IBM asked a tiny company called Microsoft to supply an operating system for all of its new "personal computers." Not being idiots, little Microsoft agreed, and DOS began its long text-based reign.

A few years later, both companies were working on new operating systems intended to take the place of DOS. Microsoft's "Windows" was less of an operating system and more of an interface, and it didn't sell very well at first. IBM's was called OS/2. It was a true operating system, but wasn't very pretty to look at. So IBM and Microsoft struck a deal. They'd work on OS/2 together and create the best operating system in history.

Then Microsoft kicked IBM in the...er...Microsoft changed its mind and decided to work on new versions of Windows instead, leaving IBM doubled over in pain.

Microsoft built quickly on the success of Windows 3.0 and 3.1, helped along by its iron grip on PC makers, who had to pay for copies of MS-DOS for every machine they sold—even if the computer shipped with OS/2 instead.

Meanwhile, IBM hobbled along, seemingly unable to develop a cohesive marketing strategy for OS/2. Game makers were forced by the overwhelming numbers of DOS and Windows customers to write for Microsoft operating systems. And that's why you don't see store shelves lined with OS/2 games.

Hey, I didn't say it had a happy ending.

Fax, mail, or e-mail your queries to the S.O.S. staff at:

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Letters	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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Multimedia News	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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Leader Board	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The Ref	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Wirehead	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Basic Training for PC Generals	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The Stars Come Out	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Guided Tour: Dungeon Keeper	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Game of the Month: Rebel Assault II	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Action						
Zone Raiders	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The Hive	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
WWF Wrestling	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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Psycho Pinball/Full Tilt Pinball/ Thexder/Expect No Mercy	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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Adventure						
Welcome to the Future	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The Dark Eye	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Shivers	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Mission Critical	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Aliens	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The 11th Hour	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
The Dig	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
I Have No Mouth/ Beavis and Butt-head	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Brain Drain						
TryTryst	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Under Pressure/Pressure Drop	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Knight Moves/Worms	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Fly & Drive						
Air Power	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
SU 27 Flanker	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Wipeout	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Absolute Zero	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
MechWarrior/Black Knight	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Role-Playing						
Anvil	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Simulation						
Doonesbury Election Game	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Lion	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Sports						
FPS Football '96	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
NBA Jam	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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Conqueror	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Empire II/ Millennia: Altered Destinies	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
Game Hardware	All/Some/None	5	4	3	2	1
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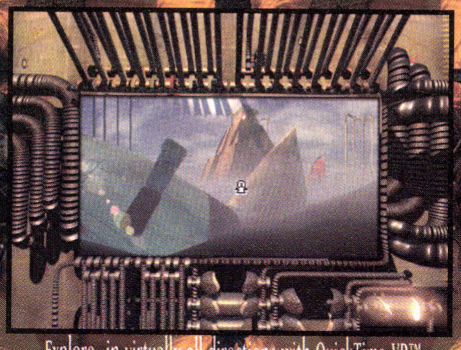
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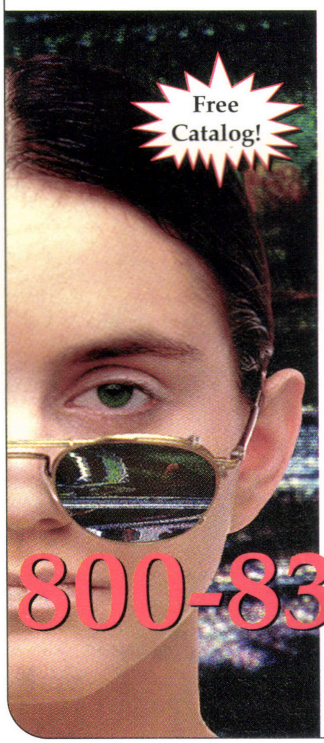
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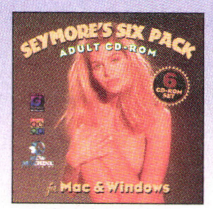
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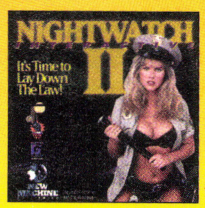
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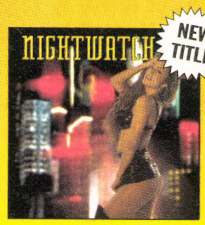
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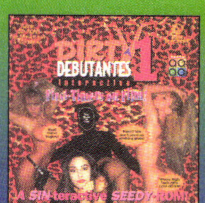
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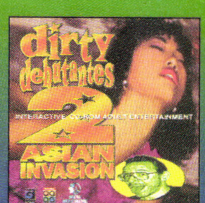
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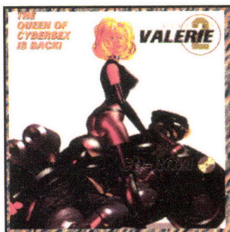
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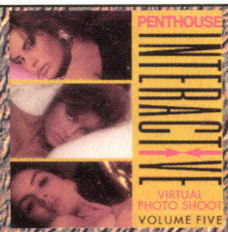
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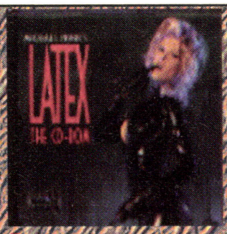
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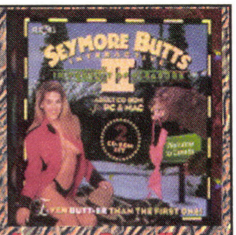
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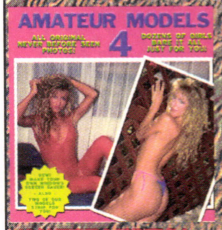
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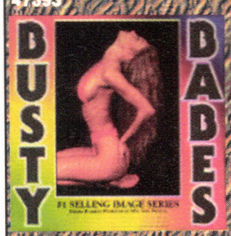
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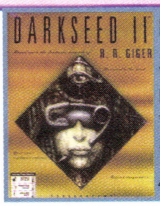
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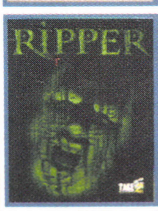
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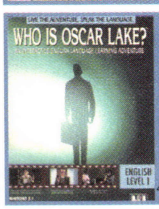
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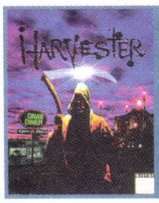
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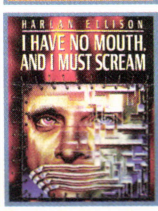


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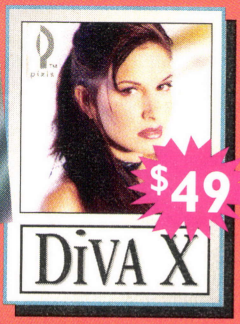
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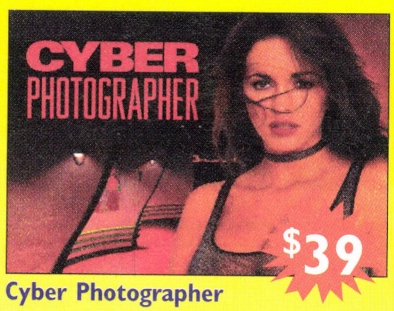


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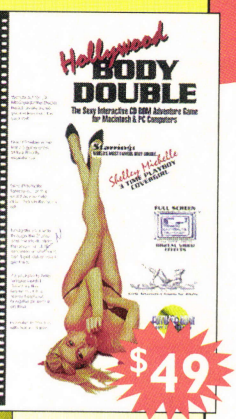
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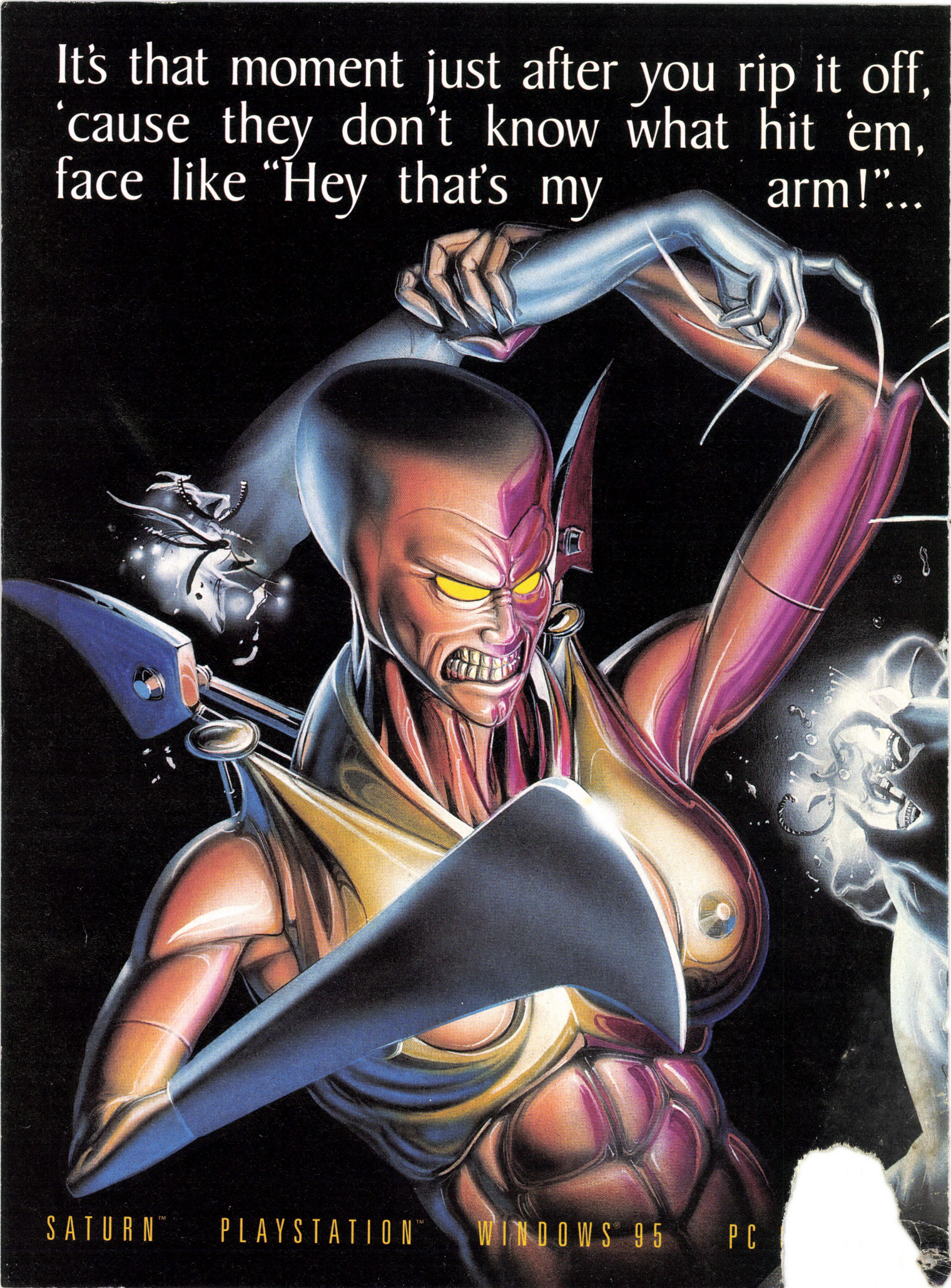
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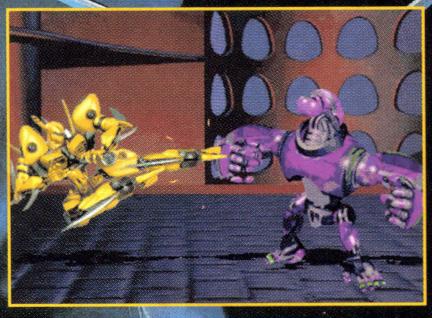
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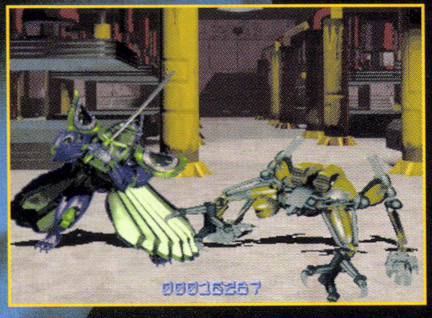
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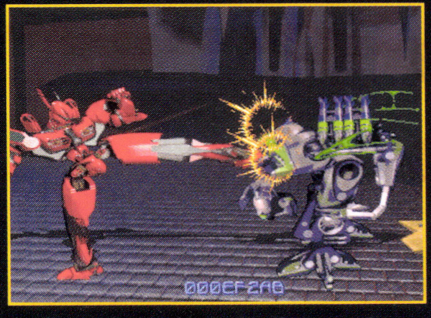
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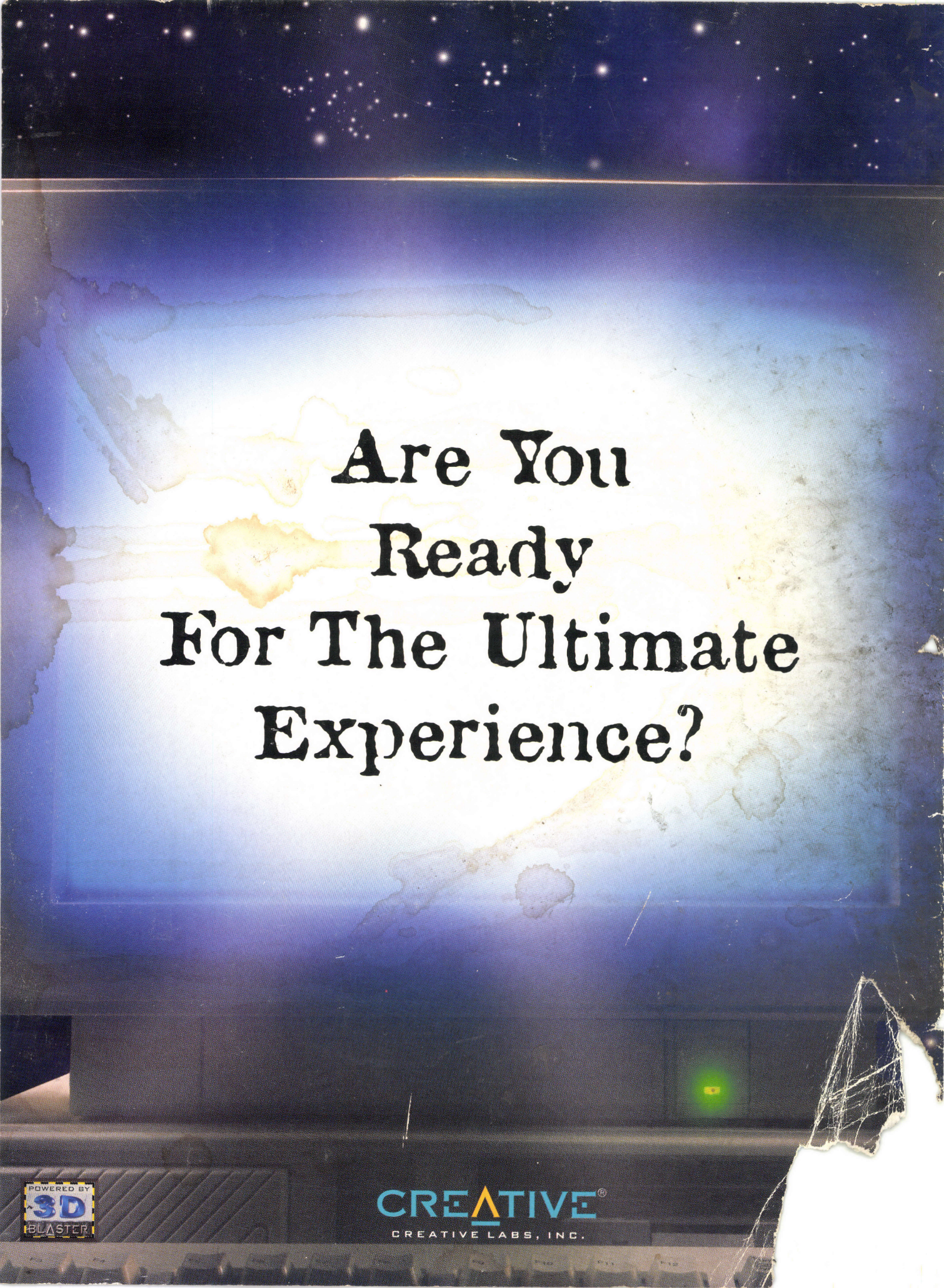


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